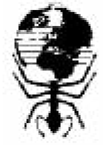


FRAMING RUSSIAN ART

From Early Icons to Malevich

OLEG TARASOV

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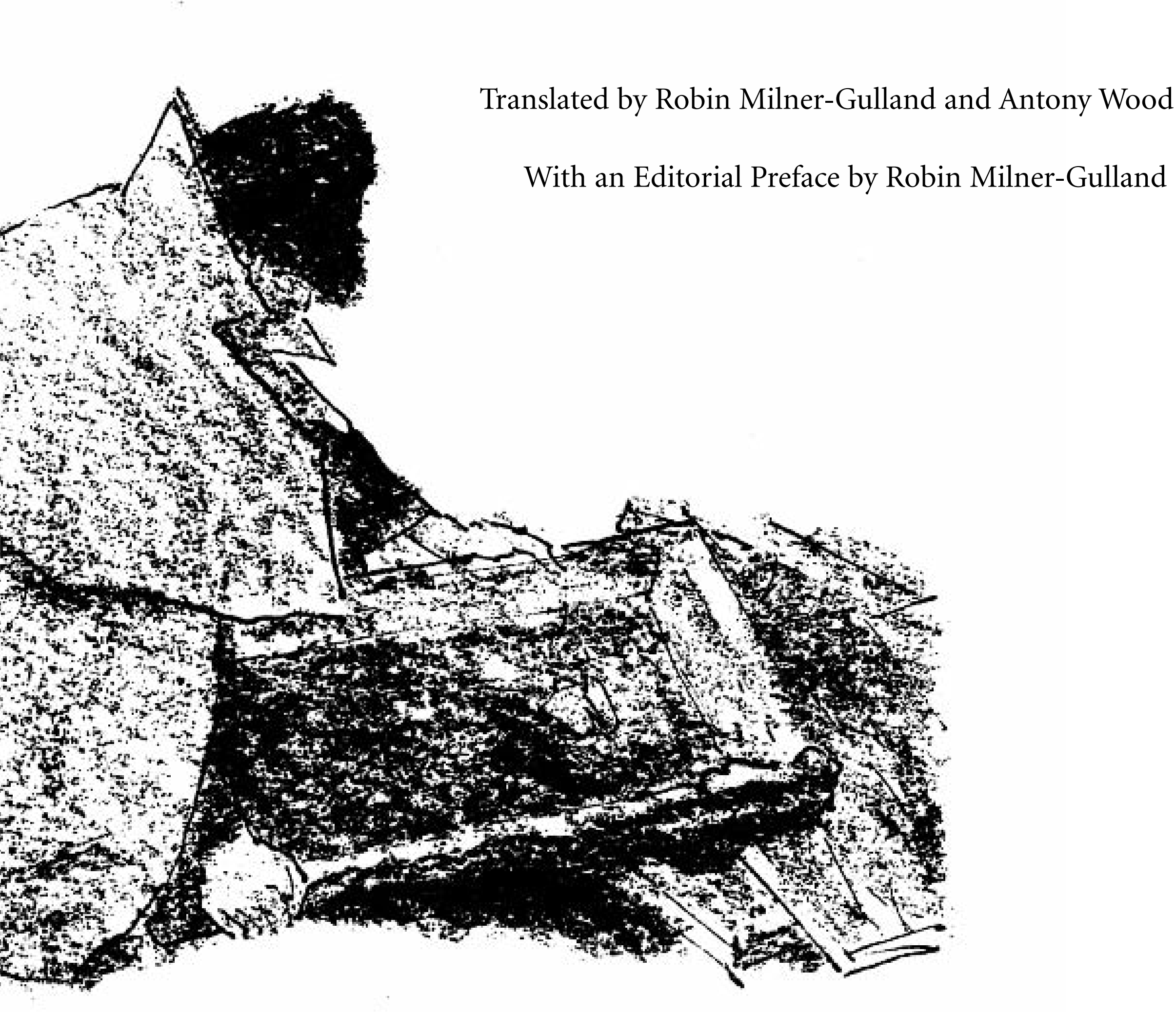
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Oleg Tarasov

Translated by Robin Milner-Gulland and Antony Wood

With an Editorial Preface by Robin Milner-Gulland



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Contents

EDITORIAL PREFACE

'Framing' may seem a minor aspect of art history and the artistic experience. It is indeed peripheral: literally so, since it concerns boundaries, edges, without which the central object or area of attention would have no defined existence. Hence, as this book makes abundantly clear, framing is in fact a major, integral aspect of the art object and of aesthetics generally. The frame lets us know where we are in contemplating, appreciating or using the art object; furthermore, it adds elements without which the object and its meanings would be incomplete – all the more powerfully, if subliminally, because we may well not be immediately conscious of them.

The frame of a work of pictorial art is (normally) a palpable and familiar object. The framing of sculptures, architectural elements and whole buildings may be less obvious, and of course seldom involves a separate, detachable object like a picture frame, yet is of just as great significance. In this book Oleg Tarasov is certainly concerned with physical, visible frames and how they act on our perceptions; but he is equally at home in discussing the semiotic frame that 'renders it [the visual image] distinctive within its surrounding space', the setting, from prayer-house to private collection to museum, within which images are required and appreciated. Thence it is a natural step to the 'conceptual frame', locating the image within a distinctive web of ideas and beliefs. This may seem to be simply what we are used to calling 'context', and indeed may well overlap with the latter; but the 'conceptual frame' is a more tightly drawn notion, of structural significance for the art object, no mere penumbra of circumstances that accompanied the accident of its emergence.

Of course, framing is not a characteristic of the visual arts alone. Stories, poems, plays, musical works may not be physical objects in the way that pictures or statues are, yet they are just as subject to the human urge – even need – for framing. We all know narratives that frame other narratives (e.g. *The Decameron*,

‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, *Heart of Darkness*), but subtler and more convoluted framings are to be found in, and between, all the arts. In a Russian context, imagine the pictures of the deceased Viktor Gartman (who happens to make a brief but surprising appearance in Tarasov’s text), each framed physically and also semiotically within an exhibition space, around which his friend Musorgsky perambulates before double-framing them individually and collectively in a musical composition, with its own verbal frame, before it is ‘re-framed’ by Ravel and others who orchestrate and re-present the piano original. Or take Tolstoy’s short story ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’, a framed narrative that, as its title implies, frames an implicit musical work, the whole subsequently re-framed, for new polemic purposes, as a string quartet by the composer Janáček (and, as has happened recently, capable of being framed again as drama – by its nature an obviously ‘framing’ medium).

Many volumes would be needed to explore these ramifications extensively (and we have not even touched upon the framing potential of, for example, translation, titles of works, dedications and authorial signatures). Oleg Tarasov wisely keeps to visual art – the visual art of one country, through 1,000 years – as his central focus of attention, but continually points out how art is framed by concepts that are expressed verbally, and indeed by the ‘rhetorical’ (i.e. persuasive) written word itself; he also touches upon the role of Russian religious art as a component of what is essentially an enveloping *Gesamtkunstwerk,* a totalizing aesthetic experience. He draws of course on a great many examples, but it would not be wrong to say that at the heart of the project realized in this book stand three great, complex artistic ‘organisms’, multiple in both their significances and their component parts: the huge (now dismantled) seventeenth-century ‘Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev’; the church ensemble and paintings of Abramtsevo; and the grand series of ‘war pictures’ by the late nineteenth-century painter Vereshchagin. Thorough and perceptive analysis shows how each of these ambitious, complex ensembles is framed by intensely experienced ideological signs in the spirit of its times. And just as in his previous book, *Icon and Devotion*, there is referential breadth of vision that moves easily beyond the circumscribed experience of one country’s culture into that of European (even world) culture, illuminating how closely the Russian cultural experience impinges on that of post-Renaissance, particularly Baroque, Europe as a whole.

The details of the materials used in this book, and the conclusions Tarasov draws from them, are set out in his Introduction and Conclusion; it would be

superfluous to repeat them here. Nevertheless, the reader may well wish to have a brief idea of the structure of the volume before engaging with it. It is chronologically ordered, but falls essentially into two halves, whose differences are to some extent thematic. The first half deals largely with art objects of religious significance, most of them 'icons' in the generally accepted sense (for a short account of icons, see the Editor's Foreword to *Icon and Devotion*). The material is thus largely 'Old Russian' (i.e. pre-1700), with extensive Western European comparisons; but in the last couple of sections the argument is taken onward through the ostensibly 'secular' age that followed, and finishes with a close examination of how icons were 'framed' as exhibits in museums up to the present. The second half concentrates on the framing of secular art objects, starting with 'palace art' – the art of power and its rituals – then continuing through the ideologically loaded paintings of the nineteenth-century Wanderers to the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, and attempts to transcend or do away with framing. On the way particular attention is paid to the development and significance of photography; also to the trade in antiques, auctions and to restorations of varying degrees of probity.

When a few years ago I was privileged to edit and translate Oleg Tarasov's *Icon and Devotion*, I wrote that 'his aim emerges as nothing less than to rewrite the cultural history of Russia since the sixteenth century'. In the present book, it seems to me, the aim and the achievement are to rewrite the history of Russian art – as a component of universal art – from the adoption of Christianity to the end of the twentieth century. Just as previously, the examples Tarasov takes are refreshingly far from the obvious art-historical commonplaces. This book itself 'frames' Russian art history, just as it in turn is framed by Russian art as a totality.

A book as intricate and substantial as this called for the efforts of two translators if it might hope to be published in reasonable time. Antony Wood joined Robin Milner-Gulland in undertaking the task, and the division of labour was simple: R. M.-G. took the first half of the book, A. W. the second. But to have two experienced translators at work on it turned out to be a great boon: we continually exchanged ideas, resolved difficult problems together, and critically examined each other's drafts. Here Oleg Tarasov too was always ready with help and ideas. It may be tedious to mention problems resistant to the ordinary processes of translation, yet in this text they strike at the heart of the operation: we have had to exercise particular care when faced with various 'framing' words:

rama, *ramka*, *freymirovaniye*, *rama-okno* (the last a much-used coinage of the author's, meaning approximately 'frame-as-window').

Beyond individual words or phrases, we were faced with the specific ways in which art – and cultural – history is periodized in Russian scholarship. Russia, as everyone knows, had no Renaissance; but, as Tarasov shows, a fairly comprehensive set of Renaissance ideas and methods trickled into the culture and arts of Russia over a couple of hundred years. Thereafter Russia is shown to have experienced every aspect of the Baroque – yet confusingly this period is divided between what are conventionally considered the 'Old' and 'Modern' Russian historical epochs. What Russians subsequently think of as the 'Age of Classicism' (*c.* 1760–1830) we tend to call 'Neoclassicism'. From the later nineteenth century we encounter the stylistic period of the 'Modern' (in Russian, *stil' modern*)– a concept that in Western parlance approaches, but does not quite overlap with, Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts, even Symbolism – predating as it does the full-scale 'Modern Movement' that dates from early in the twentieth century. We try to keep the reader aware of all these matters.

As far as transliteration is concerned, we have chosen (as with *Icon and Devotion*) what we believe to be the user-friendly 'British' system, devised by W. K. Matthews and set out, for example, in the three volumes of *The Cambridge Companion to Russian Studies*. It gives a fair idea of pronunciation to English speakers. Where standardized English forms exist (e.g. Moscow; Archangel; St Sergius) we use them; we omit the soft sign (') in well-known names; and we spell the names Alexander and Alexandra in English fashion. Names of rulers from Peter I (the Great) onwards have been put in anglicized form.

Robin Milner-Gulland

INTRODUCTION

The Rhetoric of Framing in Russian Art

This book is neither the history of a craft, nor a history of the picture frame. Its aim is quite different: to demonstrate the role and meaning of the frame both in the organization of picture-space and in the very perception of the visual image – be it a building, an icon, a painting, a print or a photograph. This relates not only to the frame as a visual object surrounding the image, but to the sort of mental and conceptual frame exemplified by a text that serves to explain the visual image in question. What is the significance of the frame in understanding what we see? Why does the frame seem necessary in some cases, but in others is deliberately avoided? And what exactly is a frame in the broad sense, how is it understood in various cultural-historical periods, within various artistic and social settings? Those are simply the general questions that define the range of this study. It would be quite justifiable to call them 'elusive', 'ungraspable', 'not fully clarified', yet still tangible and visible.

We see frames all around us, and simultaneously fail to notice them. This occurs because the frame is the point of contact between the picture and the viewer: it is located at the periphery of our gaze, at the limit of perception of a complex and multiform world. But it still assists spatial orientation: the frame directs the gaze upon the object that it so firmly holds in its embrace. This marginality of the frame's position within the process of perception lends it very important cultural-historical meanings. But how and why does that happen? It is important to realize that we shall never manage to capture the original meaning of an icon or painting if we know nothing about its original framing. Thus the meaning of the *St Paul* icon from the Deisis row of a fifteenth-century Russian iconostasis cannot be understood without a clear conception of its whole iconographic programme and of the wooden structure of which it was a constituent part. Deprived of this architectural/sculptural framework, our icon is just a 'fragment', merely a small part of the once-unified artistic ensemble of the church for which it was painted at a specific time and in a specific place. But let us go on to imagine that in the mid-nineteenth century this icon was placed in an Old Believer prayer-house, in the early twentieth century in a private collection of Old Russian art, and in our own time in a contemporary museum. In each case its significance is substantially changed. Thus the Old Believer would perceive the ancient icon as a religious image.

An early twentieth-century collector might see it as a 'masterpiece', a 'work of high art'. As a museum display it acquires the status of a 'scholarly exhibit' and takes its place in the inflexible chronology of the history of Russian art. From such an example we can draw the important conclusion that the change in meaning of this icon happens as a result of the change in its material (visible) and imaginary (invisible) framing. The icon's material frame consists of its margins, metal cladding (*oklad*), icon case (*kiot*), the structure of its wooden iconostasis, the church interior, the furnishings of the Old Believer prayer-house or the private house of the collector. It also includes various scratches, written notes, inscriptions and drawings on the back of the icon-board, which as meaningful signs constitute a semiotic frame, or that 'materialized' immediate context of the visual image that is not only part of it, but also renders it distinctive within its surrounding space, makes one concentrate on it, gives the image its own place and connections within the general flow of signs and significances of one or another culture.

There came a moment in European culture when pictures and icons acquired not only material frames distinct from the image, but conceptual frames too. This happened in the Renaissance, when picture frames reminiscent of a 'window in a wall' first saw the light of day, while simultaneously we witness the birth of the 'applied aesthetics' of Vasari and other artist-theoreticians such as Dürer or Lomazzo. Later, at the time of Kant, this will be turned into academic art theory and will be amplified by a 'system' of current opinions about pictures, linked with the trade in antiquities. That meant the pictorial representation itself was elucidated not only though a material frame, but also through written and spoken pronouncements such as a guidebook and exhibition catalogue, a book or article about an artist's work, a note on attribution, etc. All these kinds of framing disclose the conditional nature of our vision and reveal it as a distinct set of conventions. With some simplification one can say that the frame of the visual image in the broad sense of the word can be understood as a 'meeting' of the artist's and the viewer's gaze, as a result of which the artistic image is born. Since at various times the same pictures are perceived differently, so too the artistic image appears as an object of historically variable magnitude. One simple example: changing a picture frame can imply the imposition of a different point of view on what is within it.

The differentiation and development of various forms of frame for the visual image is a most important phenomenon in European culture. It is linked by a multitude of invisible threads to changes in humanity's picture of the world and its value-system. On that level the frame suggests and permits the study of a picture not in isolation, but in its close interaction with the whole culture of an age. More concretely, out of this there also emerges the fundamental object of our investigation – the history of the interaction of person and image, in which the frame is problematized as a distinct means for perceiving the world. The picture exists not only in its surrounding space, but also in the space of our thought, our consciousness, whose most important property is the ability to delimit and at the same time to connect the inner with the outer. After all, in order to understand something we have to separate it in our consciousness from that which is 'other' and at the same time connect 'this' with something else. But this process is quite

impossible without a particular value-system defining a human world-picture. Today there can be no doubting that visual images actively influence human consciousness. As far as we are concerned, we find it important to emphasize that a frame, being the means of transmitting an image, has a far from insignificant role in this influence. Thus in the Middle Ages the frame was part of the ontology of the transcendental impulse for the visual image. The framed section of the icon always took possession of surrounding space and 'deformed' it according to the divine will, opening in it a door or window onto another world, transfigured and illuminated. This world also stood in opposition to the earthly cosmos, and was alarmingly juxtaposed to it, naturally or supernaturally. But with the coming of the modern age the human mind created an image on the basis of individual imagination and personal connection with the transcendental, making use of this ability to influence the general consciousness. A truly captivating picture opens up before us on this trajectory in the modern history of European culture. We see how as images strive towards virtuality and start taking over reality, their framing is obliterated; it moves towards invisibility, to the point of 'disappearance', in photography and film.

The aim of the present work is to demonstrate that both the real and the imaginative frame of a visual image are linked with a person's picture of the world, and to propose it as a most important element of artistic space, possessing a multitude of functions; and finally to describe by means of the frame not only the actual picture-space of one or another work of art, but also cultural space in general. On this level the frame as cultural phenomenon allows us to introduce into our investigation the spectator, the artist, the collector, the antiquarian, and equally many other personages who are able to bring objects that had earlier attracted no attention into the field of scholarly investigation. To pose the question in this way demands clarification of one's initial theoretical positions, and first of all answers to two questions: (1) what is a visual image? (2) what is 'the rhetoric of framing'? Any representation is of a world that is not real, but conventionalized, a world created according to defined rules and laws that are subject to change over the course of time. Thus the name 'Napoleon' (a linguistic sign) tells us nothing about the individual features of the imperial personage; we learn about those by looking at his portrait (a visual sign). This sort of reception of a picture is lodged in human nature.[1] But the visual image can also be regarded as a 'text', which is to say that the reception and comprehension of a picture are the object of an agreement (a convention) between artist and viewer. In Russian scholarly literature the fundamentals of such an approach were laid down in works on semiotics by the Moscow-Tartu school, particularly those of Boris Uspensky and Yuriy M. Lotman, and outside Russia by Meyer Schapiro and Nelson Goodman, developed more recently by Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson.[2] Such an approach lays no special weight on the distinction between visual and linguistic signs: pictures and icons are created and received as if literary texts, and have the same rhetorical basis as written sources. This can be seen to be so if we take into account the fact that from classical times up to the eighteenth century the object itself in European representational art was defined by the written text. Artist and sculptor would primarily create those artistic images that were directly associated with religious, historical

and poetic discourse.[3] The problem of framing, as we have posed the question, is based on a second point of view, although it does hold out the possibility of a relative harmonization of the methodological approaches. This 'harmonization' does not mean the absence of methodology. Rather, the present state of knowledge dictates understanding of 'otherness', comprehension of a culture as a whole, and thus pluralism of analytical methods. If we take that as our starting point the very choice of object for investigation is often foregrounded, and method will be subjected to it.

The methodological and historiographic preconditions for our task are to be found in the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of the twentieth century, fast retreating into history. Research into the frame appears in European scholarship at the moment when artistic practice witnesses a special type of play with it, beginning with experiments by the Impressionists and continuing until its 'disappearance' among the avant-garde. In this concentration of attention on the frame we can see a peculiarity of scholarly and artistic thinking in the twentieth century – a time of analysis, of the dissection of an object into component parts with the aim of comprehending it better, of observing it from a variety of angles. Thus the twentieth century began with the amassing of 'antiquarian' data on the history of the picture frame, and ended by assigning the frame a leading role, as a demarcating and contextual element in postmodernism. The frame and everything related to it (the concept of the mobile sign and the 'framing' of meaning) is no longer at the periphery of scholarly thought, but at its centre. Between these poles we find a complex historical, philosophical and culturological rethinking of the theme of the frame. It is true that it all began rather prosaically. In 1897 the Venetian antiquarian and businessman Michelangelo Guggenheim, concerning himself with the sale and fashioning of furniture in historical styles, published more than one hundred Italian Renaissance-period picture frames. This work, revolutionary for its time, opened up the frame as a work of art to scholars and drew attention to its significance in how a picture is apprehended.[4] Guggenheim laid down a whole new direction in art-historical studies, which began to see the picture frame as an independent aesthetic object, separate, that is to say, from the picture itself. This path was followed by other scholars of the origins and art of the picture frame in Western European culture, including J. Falke, Wilhelm von Bode, Elfried Bock, Serge Roche, W. Ayrshire, Giuseppe Morazzoni and Henry Heydenryk.[5]

One of the first to pose the problem of the historical origin of the picture frame was Bock, in his *Florentinische und venezianische Bilderrahmen aus der Zeit der Gotik und Renaissance* (Munich, 1902). Examining the peculiarities of altar-construction in fifteenth-century Florence, he came to the conclusion that the picture frame appeared in the Renaissance as a result of the destruction of the Gothic tradition of altar construction. In this context he drew attention to Gentile da Fabriano's Strozzi Altarpiece, the *Adoration of the Magi* (1423; Uffizi, Florence), which many subsequent commentators would consider the last link in the chain of events leading to the separation of frame from image.[6] Bock also made comparisons between various depictions of frames on Florentine frescoes, in particular *Christ on the Cross Adored by St Dominic* by Fra Angelico in the monastery of San Marco. He also drew attention to similarities between the

shape of frames for altarpieces, the portals of Venetian cathedrals and window surrounds. There are generalizing works along the same lines by Heydenryk and Claus Grimm, as well as by Paul Mitchell and Lynn Roberts.[7] They are amplified by more and more new publications each year.[8] Catalogues of exhibitions of picture frames are important in this process.[9] Two of these, both from exhibitions in Amsterdam, have made a great contribution to our understanding of the synthesis of picture and frame: *Framing in the Golden Age: Picture and Frame in 17th Century Holland*[10] and *In Perfect Harmony. Picture + Frame, 1850–1920*.[11] The catalogue of the exhibition *The Art of the Edge*, featuring frames from the collection in the Art Institute of Chicago (1986), included an essay on the meaning of the picture frame by the famous Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset.[12]

Against this background of a stream of Western literature, Russian scholarly interest in the picture frame is relatively insignificant and essentially limited to the works of Valeriy Turchin, who turned his attention to the topic at the beginning of the 1970s, and also to some recent publications.[13] Observations on the picture frame can also be found in some more general works.[14] But it was an exhibition from the collection of the Russian Museum in St Petersburg – *Clothing the Picture: Artistic Frames in Russia, 18th–Early 20th Centuries* (2005) – that can be considered the first step in the study of picture frames as works of Russian decorative applied art.[15] A cult urological approach to the symbolism of the icon frame was undertaken in an article by Valentina Chubinskaya,[16] and also in various works by the author of this book.[17] The peculiarities of framing structures in eighteenth-century Russian theatrical productions have been surveyed by L. A. Sofronova.[18] It is interesting that at about the same time as Guggenheim was publishing his work on picture frames, the Russian scholar N. I. Troitsky was the first to present the iconostasis as a symbolic structure. It was he who drew attention to the decorative artistic frame of the iconostasis, which for him was symbolically linked with the icons themselves.[19] From that point on one may consider that Russian study of the iconostasis has made a serious contribution to European scholarly work on the frame. The fullest idea of this tradition is given in a series of essays, *The Iconostasis: Origin – Development – Symbolism*, edited by A. M. Lidov.[20]

In the 1960s and '70s the frame of a work of art began to interest the world of semiotics. Here the writings of Yuriy Lotman and Boris Uspensky, in which they examined the problems of the connection between the frame and cultural space, have particular relevance to the problems posed in the present book: they discussed the frame on the one hand as part of the composition, on the other as linked with the cultural-historical context.[21] The question of the frame as a component of the work of art was also touched upon by Lev Zhegin in 'The Language of the Artwork'.[22] In Western scholarship questions concerning the frame in the context of visual semiotics have been studied by Schapiro.[23] Nowadays the theoretical aspects of the semiotics of the frame are most insistently resonant in works of art history. The methodological and thematic component of art-historical literature on this topic (above all British and American) bear witness to a fundamental retreat from positivistic studies in the direction of the conceptual re-evaluation of individual works and a widespread use of the tools of philosophy. The history of art appears to be close to the culturology and philosophy of history.

Erwin Panofsky was one of the first to demonstrate such an approach when he adopted his iconological method. Taking drawings of picture frames by Giorgio Vasari as his starting point, Panofsky showed that the frame could exemplify the most important cultural historical ideas of the age.[24]

Jacques Derrida's concept of the 'openness' and 'penetrability' of the frame has exercised a great influence on contemporary work in the field. In his essay 'Parergon' (Greek 'addition', 'adornment'), the theme of framing is developed in close conjunction with his idea of the 'mobile sign'.[25] According to Derrida, the sign is not a link with a single, unique 'signified', meaning the same for everybody – rather, it is a movement, a flow from one signifier to another. Hence artistic space is understood by him as open in principle: the aesthetic boundary is obliterated, while the idea of the frame as closing off an artistic text is placed in doubt. A semiosis based on the destruction of the frame is proposed. In Derrida, first and foremost it is a question of the frame as an aesthetic and philosophical category. His aim is to demonstrate that the idea that framing an art object means 'closing it off' and 'separating it out' is of no help in considering the frame itself as a special cultural zone. The logic of 'closure' leads to a description of the 'external' and clarification of the 'internal', but the frame itself has neither 'interior' nor 'exterior': it is a special zone that permits the exterior and the interior to interpenetrate. This penetrability of the frame in fact also implies the destruction of an aesthetic boundary, its mobility at will, opening the way to an endlessly mobile semiosis (with no beginning or end). The same penetrability also determines the dissolution of meaning, which according to Derrida takes place within certain kinds of social and historical parameters. Nothing is logically closed off, and there is nothing that is permanent. Culture is conceived as an open field for the movement of signs that acquire and lose their definitions. For that reason, too, any representation is always 'framing itself' with a variety of fluid meanings. It is, as it were, imbued with them.

'The frame' and 'framing' can be understood in Derrida both as the object of analysis and as a working concept. If in the word 'framing' we emphasize its procedural and technical significance, it comes close to nothing less than a method of scientific analysis. It is clear that how something is 'framed', or the idea of 'framing', are both closely linked to the concept of 'deconstruction'.[26] One of the concrete senses of the latter is actually the construction of a context. It has to be understood that, in the words of the philosopher himself, deconstruction is not a negative operation. On the one hand, it is a question of dismantling and unpicking the structure (each of its component parts – philosophical, linguistic, cultural, political, etc.); on the other hand, by 'deconstruction' is meant 'rather some sort of genealogical investigation, than destruction'. This unpicking and dismantling assume a comprehension of the fact that a given 'ensemble' was itself constructed: that is to say, the reconstruction of the ensemble so that it can be deconstructed. If we take into account this multivalency of the word 'deconstruction', 'framing' of meaning becomes the chief basis for the new semiotics. The 'framing' of an object of study can look like some kind of threading together or linking in a chain of more and more meaningful frames, that is to say endless meanings enclosed within each other.

This approach to the study of a work of art was in fact prepared for by the emergence of inter-

pretation as a form of analysis. It was discussed by Hans Sedlmayr, when he made an appeal 'to take equally into account that "sphere" of a work of art that surrounds its visible form like a more spacious, subtler, invisible envelope, that has to be reckoned with so as to fully understand that work of art'.[27] It is noteworthy that Mikhail Alpatov too gave thought to the context of the frame, and his words were quoted by the German scholar:

> There is no need for the external limits of the work of art to coincide with its 'essential limits'. The substitution of external physical limits for its essential limits would once again lead, from another point of view, to the 'objectification' of art, which is just what should be avoided. In fact much that lies beyond these limits stands closer to the essence of the work of art than what is included in the limits of the frame.[28]

All these theoretical aspects of the frame nowadays find a broad response in contemporary writings on art history, in which it is often emphasized that interpretation carries no ultimate truth in itself, whereas any historical fact reveals the influence of whatever theory it is received from. The collection of articles published in 1996 as *The Rhetoric of the Frame* would seem to demonstrate almost the entire spectrum of problematics on the theme of the frame.[29] One can trace in it the influence of the most varied theories: Saussurean structuralism, 'deconstruction' and psychoanalysis. The frame as a material boundary of the work of art is analysed in close connection with the artistic image, and is studied as an inalienable part of the work, introducing a multitude of cultural-historical meanings.

Several scholars have attempted to understand the mechanism of visual perception itself.[30] Side by side with their works on the theme in question, great importance attaches to the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, who developed the concept of the visual symbolic field that has of course influenced numerous modern studies of cinema, subjecting visual perception to the imagined world. According to Lacan, a central problem of the psychoanalysis of the visual field comes down to the question of illusion and is closely linked with the concept of the 'imagined'. What the human gaze defines as a visual field is only an illusion, since in reality it is defined (as is language) by a sign system for structuring the surrounding world that already exists in society.[31] This position has a special significance for the understanding of such a conceptual and spatial framing of the artwork as a museum display. The museum and its organization is one of the most discussed themes in contemporary scholarship.[32] And this is no accident, since the museum evidently exists not simply to serve as the 'framing' of cultural artefacts, but also so as to exercise an 'imperceptible' effect on the mass consciousness, since its galleries and display cases set out the means by which one or another historical epoch can be elucidated. In this sense the museum is one of the most elevated and complex frames for human perception.

In the last decades of the twentieth century it was not by chance that the theme of the frame came to be (and has remained) the object of heightened attention on the part of philosophers, culturologists, literary scholars and art historians. This is understandable: in the scholarship and art of the last century interest in the frame was linked with the historical displacement of rationalism and

the birth of a new type of logic. From the time of Aristotle, logic had been understood as the science of correct thinking, guaranteeing that if the premises were right the conclusion would be too. The twentieth century first put this proposition in doubt. Scientific knowledge ceased to be knowledge of Nature 'as it really is' and ceased to be objective in the sense of being independent of humanity. As a result scholars strove to inscribe a subjective impulse into their picture of the world. It is precisely in this connection that the theme of the frame has acquired a particular immediacy in the contemporary humanities. The frame as a problem for scholarship represents a concentration of scholarly attention on those difficulties and 'hindrances' that prevent one from penetrating through the text to the reality that gave rise to it, to the very people of the past. That certainly does not mean that this is absolutely impossible, that the past 'did not exist', and does not exclude a search for precise knowledge about this or that document, icon or painting. But it would be hard to deny nevertheless that the displacement of the framework of historical perceptions does not, in fact, produce a new reality: historical cognition as a dialogue of cultures cannot help but reflect the actual observer. Hence the theme of the rhetoric of framing permits us to foreground not the task of attaining objective reality, as positivistic scholarship would have posed it, but rather the task of reproducing an image of reality in its cultural-historical integrity. Pictures constructed according to a rhetorical principle, just like written sources, give the investigator only a pallid, and sometimes even totally distorted, copy of historical reality.[33] But how exactly did the frame employ its whole rich arsenal of rhetorical weaponry to demonstrate that which was and that which was not – to demonstrate a flight of fancy? That is obviously one of those questions that stimulate the sort of interdisciplinary methods that nowadays are so necessary: a bringing together of structural typology with cultural anthropology, reception theory and the history of concepts, value systems, symbols and rituals. Certain principles of modern rhetorical theory and postmodern philosophy have important significance for a deepened understanding of the theme of the frame.

If the expression 'rhetoric of framing' had been used as a subtitle to this book, we have in so doing aligned ourselves with the modern concept of rhetoric, that is, with a broadened meaning of rhetoric as the art of persuasion. Aristotle himself, father of the subject, defined it as the 'science of the general'. Rhetoric is the 'commonplace' (*locus communus*), the model and its invariant; it is a text based on a text. Therefore modern scholarship sometimes regards European cultural epochs before Romanticism as cultures of rhetorical type, at the basis of which lay the rhetorical principle of organization of the text and notion of artistic space – the principle of orientation towards a model and the creation of its invariant. Here it should be emphasized that, unlike previous cultural epochs, the period of Romanticism made a point of individualism. Rhetoric and the orientation towards models and rules were criticized by the Romantics from their position of creative individuality.[34] However, from the point of view of the 'new rhetoric' even a realistic picture from the nineteenth century would have a concealed rhetorical basis, inasmuch as it represented a projection of a three-dimensional object on the two dimensions of the surface of the canvas, and consequently a stylized sign system. Precisely such a stylized system of signs also

represents a definite historical convention. From this point of view the frame of a visual image will fully reflect a concrete historical situation of 'dialogue' between picture and viewer. The frame merely fixes those meanings that are the product of a particular epoch.

Alongside this we shall also discuss framing specifically in 'Russian art', which implies paying special attention to those aesthetic theories that determined the artistic peculiarities of the image. The frame of an icon or picture of course changed as concepts of the 'beautiful' changed. For that reason the 'framing' of the idea of beauty is an inner motif of this book. And in this context it is important to underline that it is possible to speak of the Russian icon as art in the strict sense of the word only from the second half of the seventeenth century, when the very concept of 'liberal art' first appeared in Rus' – the concept, that is to say, of an autonomous mimetic art claiming to apprehend the surrounding world. It was then that there appeared in Russian art the mimetic (i.e. imitating nature) visual image – easel painting – which demands a separate frame. Before then the Russian icon is the sort of canonical art that by Berdyayev's definition 'belongs to a pre-creative epoch, still within the limits of law and redemption', since until the Renaissance 'art in the final meaning of that word did not exist and could not do so. The proper anthropology had not yet been discovered.'[35] The art of the medieval icon painter consisted in a knowledge of the a priori rules of the craft, not in creative imagination. The Old Russian icon was a cult object – a theological ideal of heavenly beauty, inseparable from the sacred space of the church and standing in opposition to surrounding reality.[36] And only with the appearance in Muscovite Rus' of an aesthetic theory of a Renaissance type did the icon begin to be regarded as art, that is to say did it turn into a learnedly aesthetic and philosophical ideal of divine wisdom, towards which there was one guide: the artist. Earlier, the power of an icon was a gift of God; now it was to depend on the free choices of the artist, whose art was taken into the service of the Church. These new pictorial icons began to be made in the circle of the masters of the Armoury Chamber under Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, when Western European artists arrived in Moscow and started to teach Russian masters the fundamentals of Renaissance art. Peter the Great, who invited architects, engravers and painters from abroad, proposed initiating the teaching of the 'liberal arts' (painting and sculpture) in an 'Academy of Sciences and Curious Arts', which was provisionally realized under his successor, Catherine I. Finally, in St Petersburg in 1757, at the initiative of Count Ivan Shuvalov, an 'Academy of the Three Most Distinguished Arts' was set up, in which a general classical programme for the free arts – painting, sculpture and architecture – was laid down. It contained clear, incontrovertible and mutually reinforcing rules, in the context of which frame and image were subordinated to the aesthetic theories regarding beauty. These were to lie at the basis of Russian art of the Baroque, Neoclassical and Romantic periods. And if rhetoric was an internal mechanism of all these cultural epochs, then the frame was a most important indicator of those new ideals of beauty that lay at the basis of the creation of all kinds of visual images: icons, pictures, engravings and so on. Thus the historical trajectory of the frame and the ways it existed within culture are closely linked with the peculiarities of the human picture of the world.

In the course of our present study we shall distinguish two groups of problems. On the one hand the frame will be examined as a vehicle for delivering the visual image, on the other as a threshold for its perception. The first group directly relates to the active role of the frame in the construction of the artistic space of a church, a palace or an exhibition gallery, which has been defined as representing 'the model of the world of a given author, expressed in the language of special relations'.[37] In this respect we can assert that it is precisely the specific interpretation of artistic space that brings the history of the framing of the icon, the pictorial window-style frame, frame-like cropping of a photograph or film to life. The history of the frame is the history of the mastering of artistic space. From this comes the significant broadening of the field of enquiry concerning what might have seemed as narrow a subject as the frame, since it involves the task of global observation and its comprehension as a cultural-historical context. In any case to find out what is 'particular' we need to take as broad a background as possible.

Throughout this book the reader will encounter certain constant expressions – 'house', 'window', 'door', 'stairs'. These constitute formative symbols of European culture, threading right through its cultural-historical strata and emerging in a multitude of contexts. Hence it is not by accident that these framing constructs have always been those that order artistic space, while changes in them have reflected alterations in major cultural meanings of the sacred and the worldly, the visible and the invisible. In the first part of the book, devoted to the framing of the icon, an attempt has been made to show how these constructions were formed and in answer to what needs, how they changed and were relocated within Russian and Western European culture. In this context we devote particular attention to the autonomy of the frame of the medieval sacred image, that is to say to the close link between the appearance of the window-like frame with the development of the concept of an independent mimetic art. The icon as a cult image was always directed towards the presentation, not the self-knowledge of its subject. The frame of a medieval icon is a blank wall, emphasizing the inflexibility and permanence of divine truth. But as soon as the image becomes art, it at once leads consciousness along the path of imagination and conviction. Thus a separate frame, which could allow a person to compare it with something else (say, a window), is essential for the image. As soon as the idea of art acquires autonomy, the frame is separated from the representation, while the autonomous art itself is drawn into the service both of the Church and the government, which see the possibility of enrolling the idea of beauty in the cause of goodness, truth, the affirmation of civic ideals and so on. Thus if the traditional icon is set in opposition to surrounding reality, the icon as art object actively cooperates with it. It ceaselessly affirms its profound, inviolable connection with time: the autonomous theory of art is devoted to the elucidation of its existential riches. Hence the interior of a Russian eighteenth-century church can remind one of the interior of a palace, and the frame of an icon of that of a secular picture. For the same reason the icon as art object can be regarded from the point of view of its own formal qualities, since it is based on the individual artistic intention of a master, and also on the set rules of rhetoric, the analysis of which permits us to understand the very mechanism of the formation

of such religious images. It is to fulfil these tasks that the first half of this book is devoted to analyses of numerous icons, arks, folding images, engravings, and of the grandiose iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev (late seventeenth–early eighteenth centuries; now kept, dismantled, in the A. V. Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow); and, finally, to an analysis of the interior of the church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo (1881–2), which serves as an interesting example from which to trace the very history of the framing of the Russian religious image. In the process particular attention is paid to museum displays of Old Russian icons at the beginning of the twentieth century, when in the context of the aesthetics of Romanticism, the artistic form of Old Russian icons began to be erroneously regarded as analogous to Renaissance art.

The second part of the book is basically devoted to the framing of the secular picture. In chapter Three we investigate the framing, thus the exaltation, of persons of power (particularly in the halls of the Great Kremlin Palace). Above all this concerns the function of the frame of the ceremonial portrait, which changes in consequence not only of art theory, but also of the conception of state power. The power of an imperial portrait consists in its frame's bearing the formula of a title according to the proper pattern. The frame links the portrait with the historical and mythological context, since it is 'in the name that the whole most profound essence of social life, in all its endless forms, is rooted'.[38] Finally, chapter Four is devoted to the framing of pictures by the nineteenth-century Russian Romantics, as well as to the problem of the frame in the culture of the Russian avant-garde of the 1910s and '20s. The Romantic aesthetic was concerned not with the problem of imagination (as was Baroque aesthetics), nor of reason (like the aesthetics of Neoclassicism), but of emotional experience and the psychological perception of the object. Thus if the frames of the Baroque or Neoclassical periods deployed fantasy or reason in the service of their mental images, the frames of famous pictures by Vereshchagin or the Russian Wanderers brought their consciousness to bear on a quite different objective: the naturalistic depiction of a moralistic maxim or of a historical episode. This was the background against which the Russian avant-garde declared the end of the age of easel painting, thereby 'overcoming' the frame-as-window and putting forward a fundamentally new aesthetic of images.

Since the frame is indissolubly connected with the process of perception of an image, its analysis touches on anthropological questions. For that reason in the last part of the book the frame is displaced from the artistic sphere of creativity into marginal zones of culture and even into the realm of deviant thinking. Why, you might ask, is this necessary? The fact is that when the frame and image are located in a variety of spaces the conditions arise for their significance to alter. For example, the settings of a museum, an auction house or a shabby antiques shop speak of very different evaluations of one and the same picture for one and the same person, since their spatial framings vary in the status of their 'authenticity' and 'worth' as it affects the work of art. The frame is both an instrument of separation and of connection, and for that reason, depending on one's evaluative standpoint, these separations and connections are organized around historical, cultural and socio-psychological factors that are not simply subject to changes, but are in a state of constant flux. Hence, using the example of

the historical forms that the antiques trade and the smuggling of icons and pictures have taken, we are drawn into a complicated and almost limitless game of commentary. And here it is essential to note that, since the frame is the threshold for our perception, it should alert the researcher (as also the spectator) against excessive trustfulness. The frame is not only an agent of persuasion, but also of provocation, and surreptitiously hints at the system of values within which the image should be viewed and 'read'. The frame is the sign of its meaning, and since the frame can be altered for various reasons, so too can the meaning be changed. Once born into the world, the work of art is immediately subject to all the vicissitudes of human perception. Religious and secular images embark on a long voyage, during which they will be perceived by different spectators in different cultures at various times. 'During their posthumous lives they [i.e. great works] are enriched by new significances and meanings', wrote Mikhail Bakhtin, 'and such works outgrow what they had been at the time of their creation'.[39] The stages of this complicated journey – the birth, life and death of images – are indeed fixed by frames. It is precisely for this reason that a fragment of an antique statue can find itself next to Impressionist canvases in a fashionable private collection, the Russian icon of the apostle St Paul (discussed earlier) is in a contemporary museum, while a painting by some eighteenth-century German artist, in the course of its 200-year journey, can acquire, from the hand of a skilful antiquary, the signature of a well-known Dutch artist of the seventeenth century and be put into an antiques auction.

All these new frames on ancient icons and old frames on new pictures speak of how cultural signs can enter into a multitude of contexts. For this reason if we set ourselves the task of investigating how individual images change their framing over the centuries, we find ourselves in the territory of how mutable context itself is. The picture 'enters' various frames, just as it 'enters' various contexts; in the process its old meanings are dissipated, and new ones acquired that are very distant from an understanding of the original significances. In relation to this we should bear in mind that it is the frame that is more ready to take on new meanings than the image itself. Thus a medieval master strives to follow the canonical depiction of Christ or a saint as closely as possible, but in elaborating the frame of the icon – choosing the width of the margins, including additional figures or decorations on them – he operates more freely. And it is precisely on such a journey that the Russian allegorical or symbolic icon of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could acquire the frame practically of a secular picture, while on the contrary the portrait of a monarch could be sacralized and receive a frame similar to that of an icon. These were games played in the Baroque; but other periods – when the picture, changing countries, owners and dwelling places, changed its frame too – are similar. Thus the frame is a 'commentary', without frontiers and in constant movement. Tracing this movement is an enthralling pastime. The history of Russian art presents rich material of this kind: standing on the crossroads between great cultures and constituting a culture of its own, Russia from earliest times underwent influences coming out of Byzantium, Western Europe and the Islamic East. For that reason the disruptions and connections within Russian history, the multinational make-up of the Russian empire, its cultural extensiveness, with a multitude

of intersecting boundaries, was all reflected not only in images but also in frames. These frames were not only bearers of cultural influences, however, but also caused what was within them to change, could have an active effect on the image inside. It was they that dictated a new manner of reception, exercising a particular kind of stimulus within Russian culture.

When we analyse framing as a cultural phenomenon, we cannot fail to notice that the frame, like the picture, also has its own space and time. Here we find certain signs, figures, relationships and structures that can be used again and again, and with whose help any frame was bound to establish both similarities and differences. The interplay of these forces preconditioned the fluctuations of the symbolic ties between frame and image, which were founded on the understanding and employment of such crucial cultural concepts and categories as symbol, metaphor, emblem and allegory. When included in one or another type of framing, these caused the image to 'speak' in either its natural language or in one that was alien to it. So the history of the frame is also to be understood as the history of how cultural concepts of the sacred and the secular, the pious and the blasphemous, the visible and the invisible, the true and the false, relate to each other. The frame is a bipolar field through which lies the borderline between these universal oppositions. Thus as one puts oneself into different epochs one can very quickly reach the conclusion that the frame represents some kind of field of conceptual and theoretical connectedness: that it sensitively answered to the general strivings of a culture, reflecting its deep processes and the varied influences upon it.

PART ONE

FRAME AND IMAGE

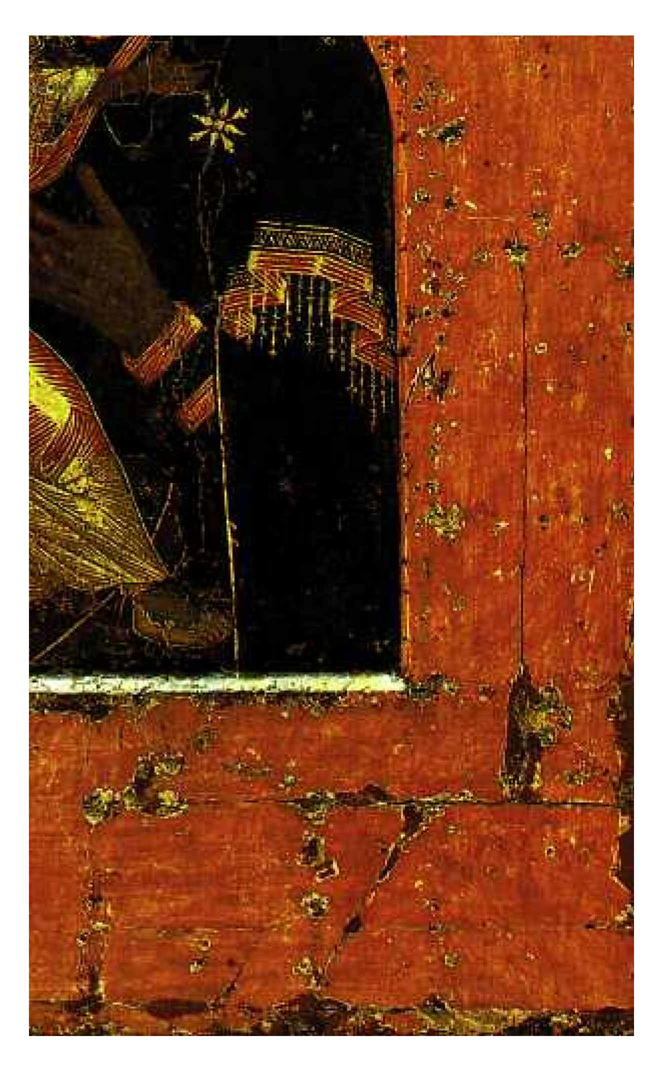


1 *Vladimir Mother of God*. *c*. 1131, with later restorations. Made in Constantinople. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

CHAPTER 1

Symbolic Unity

Earth! Thou comest close to Heaven through God's grace.
Heaven! Through God's grace art thou reconciled with Earth.
Dimitriy Rostovsky[1]



2 Detail of the ark.

Ark and Niche

The frame of a medieval icon, whether of the seventh century or the twelfth, is a border between the sacred and the worldly that brings to mind the severe wall of a Byzantine church, a safe stronghold that protects the space of the church from our world that has gone astray. This is not accidental. Byzantium intended the icon to be a complex sign system with several layers of perception and comprehension. The chief peculiarity of this system is that all these layers formed an unbreakable symbolic unity and were strictly subordinated to the theological and liturgical context. For that reason the frame of the icon is the initial level at which one perceives the central 'countenance'; it 'highlights' holiness, while always deliberately implying distance and presuming the concealment of that which lies behind it, not allowing one to approach and scrutinize the object. The object has to be taken as what it is and not what it might seem to be. But the light also illuminates the person standing before the object. Thus the light is capable of giving out illumination: it potentially links the object and the subject of cognition, since it can be related to that 'light' which in the metaphysical

writings of Dionysios the Pseudo-Areopagite is understood to be the unmediated divine energy.[2] The glittering precious stones and gold of the framing of the icon both receive and give forth a mysterious light. The adornments of an icon are human gifts to God, but their mystical highlights are elucidated by invisible dimensions. For that reason the icon frame and the depiction are for the religious consciousness indissolubly joined. The frame strives to make plain its fusion with symbol – the representation of God or a saint; in its turn this representation strives to coincide with its meaning. This is the meaning of the icon.

In the medieval icon, frame and representation have a single material basis. The icon is painted on one or more boards, joined together by special fastenings. The margins of an icon – its 'material frame' – come into being as a result of a hollow being cut into the middle of the icon, on which the image of Christ, the Mother of God or a saint is painted. In the Russian language this icon frame was given a special name: 'ark' (*kovcheg*). Here is how one commentator defined its profound basis in dogma:

> Within icons there is nothing accidental. Even the ark – the raised frame, containing the representation in its hollow – has a dogmatic foundation: the human being, located in the frames of space and time, of earthly existence, has the opportunity to contemplate the heavenly and the divine not directly, not straightforwardly, but only when it is revealed by God as if from the depths. The light of Divine Revelation in heavenly phenomena as it were moves aside the frames of earthly existence and shines with a splendid radiance, surpassing all earthly things, from out of a mysterious distance.[3]



3 Portrait of an unknown person, 1st century AD. British Museum, London.



4 Heron and unidentified military god, *c.* AD 200. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.

Hence it is clear that the ark of an icon is a definite means of linking the central image with surrounding space. Just such a construction characterizes the major holy object of early Rus', the icon of the *Virgin Eleousa* (*Vladimir Mother of God*), brought from Constantinople in the early twelfth century (illus. 1). In the central recessed portion of the board on the front of the icon the image of the Mother of God with the infant Christ is represented, separated from the surrounding space by broad margins, that is to say the frame (illus. 2). Detailed investigations have shown that in its present form this icon is a complex construction of the remains of painting and structural additions of various periods. Thus the frame of the icon (its margin) has changed several times depending on the function of the image. Originally the icon, evidently, was portable. Subsequently it was trimmed down and battens were added to the frame, widening the margins. The picture was repainted many times. In the fifteenth century a representation of the *Hetimasia* (Prepared Throne) was accommodated on the back of the board. In this way over the centuries this notable icon underwent several interferences, was decorated with a variety of metal casings and additions, and was placed in surrounding structures – cases and iconostases. As its restorer and investigator Alexander Anisimov noted, 'In its present form the Vladimir icon is no longer a painting that is the work of one hand and brush. Almost every century from the 13th to the 20th has left its traces in its complex texture.'[4] All these additions, scars and marks are no less than 'the capricious elements of memory', that is to say the historical traces of the connection of the image and its frame with surrounding historical reality. But the chief peculiarity of this famous icon from our



5 *Christ in Glory*, 7th century.
Monastery of St Catherine on Sinai.

point of view – the presence of an ark – remained unchanged. How then did it arise and what did it mean? We just know one thing: ancient classical and Old Testament traditions stood behind it.

Prehistoric cave art, of course, had no knowledge of any frame. An early artist's drawings even cut into one another: in his consciousness they were not marked off from surrounding space and 'lived' in different spatial dimensions. Neither did the art of Buddhism know the frame as a delimiting boundary. In ancient China and Japan the slightest nuances in brush strokes were valued. Nevertheless, the artist and viewer put stamps onto the pictorial surface itself: they did not think of it as connected with the background.[5] In the context of pantheistic mysticism of the Buddhist picture, it represents reality itself, a striving to show the fusion of the natural and the divine in the world. This determined its form in the shape of a horizontal and vertical scroll, embodying not a window into another space, but actually the surrounding cosmos itself in all its uninterruptedness and multiformity. On a horizontal scroll the pictures are not separated from one another, but rather presented in a definite sequence from right to left, while on a vertical scroll the landscape is structured so that the human gaze grasps the whole composition at once.[6] Hence in Japanese medieval architecture the idea of the façade as boundary between the house and surrounding space is also absent. In a traditional Japanese house a person always looks from the interior outwards: he or she surveys maybe the landscape, maybe a small garden, since the outside walls of the house are able to slide apart.

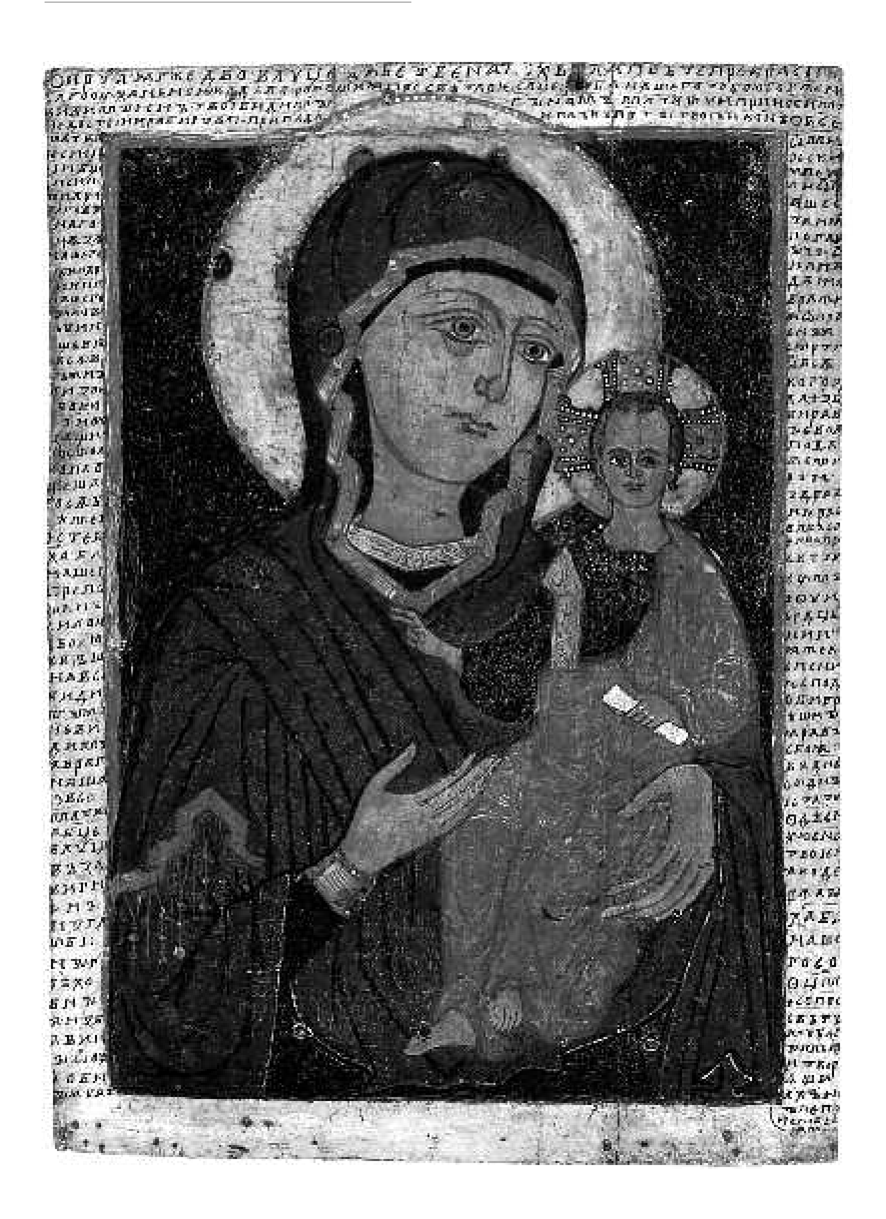
During antiquity the representation separated itself off from surrounding space. In numerous Roman wall paintings imitating landscapes we find frames in the form of a 'window on the world', while in theatrical decor we find the beginnings of true perspective. However, the antique concept of the universal presence of the divine principle in the world also failed to accentuate the frame as a boundary between the worldly and the divine that was characteristic of pagan religions. Thales of Miletus (*c.* 624–546 BC), the first of the Seven Sages, pronounced that 'everything is filled with the gods'. For that reason the frame in antiquity is a niche or the pedestal of a statue, or the architectural composition of a door, a window or a wall. Frames were also constituted by acanthus, palmate or meander ornaments and various geometric figures surrounding the antique mosaics and frescoes that were so startlingly beautiful and full of feeling. All these were a part of the work of art itself, however, and their function was to underline anew the harmony and sensibility of the whole, to demarcate the temple, sculpture or picture within surrounding space and simultaneously to 'open up' one to the other, to dissolve the boundary between the sacred and the profane in the cognitive model of divine omnipresence. In this sense the severe and massive walls of a Byzantine church are significantly different from the 'transparent' colonnades of Greek temples, thanks to which a god does not seem remote from the world. An antique temple is 'open' to the surrounding world and, as Heidegger remarked, 'it contains within itself the aspect of the god and, while shutting it away in its closed cell, permits the aspect of the god to come forth into the sacred precinct of the temple through the open colonnade'.[7] For the live figure of an emperor, an open portico and a pedestal lifting him above the surroundings

serve as an analogous type of framing. Accommodating his statue or that of a pagan god there would be a three-dimensional niche in a wall, shutting the figure off only from one side and underlining its physical presence, or similarly a pedestal, lifting the statue upwards into the surrounding cosmos as if up a flight of stairs. All these possibilities represent an 'open', spatially constituted frame, whose chief function was to persuade humanity of its kinship with higher personages in the universe. To put it another way, antique art considered the frame not as a symbolic barrier, but as an instrument for concentrating attention on the image, as part of its composition and of the organization of artistic and surrounding real space.[8]

All the same in late antiquity we encounter certain framing constructions that in the future would be adapted to Christian images on boards. Scholarly observations on the Faiyyum portraits and on pictorial representations of pagan gods are of particular interest here. A Faiyyum portrait of the first century AD, discovered by the British archaeologist Flinders Petrie in 1888, for example, has an eight-sided wooden frame reminiscent of frames on Christian icons of the sixth and seventh centuries recorded by Kurt Weitzmann in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (illus. 3).[9] An analogous frame is found on an antique prayer image in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (illus. 4).[10] Moreover, on two Sinai icons of the sixth or seventh century, regarded as among the earliest Christian icons, the representations of *Christ* and the *Apostle Peter* are shown against the background of an antique niche, which will eventually become the ark of an icon. All this tells us that it was from classical antiquity that early Christianity borrowed all kinds of forms and images, giving them a new symbolic meaning. The icon *Christ in Glory* (seventh century, illus. 5) from the Sinai monastery has retained an ancient frame that distantly recalls both the frame of a Faiyum portrait and those of late antique representations of gods. However, unlike the Faiyum portrait frames, that of the icon has been given clear symbolic significance. This frame forms an ark that is on the one hand uninterruptedly connected with the actual picture, and on the other with the surrounding space and with the person who no doubt placed it in the Sinai monastery: so we read on the frame the Greek inscription 'For the salvation and exculpation of the sins of Thy slave, who loveth Christ . . .'.

Thus the tradition of antiquity encountered that of the Old Testament in the space of the material frame of the medieval Christian icon. It was in fact the Old Testament tradition, distancing God from the world, that first accentuated the symbolism of the frame as a distinct boundary between God and the world. The Old Testament Ark of the Covenant was a sealed box that would safely keep holy objects away from the eyes of unconsecrated people. We read in the Bible (Exodus 25:1–14):

> And the Lord spake . . . they shall make an ark of shittim wood . . . And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about . . . And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.



Traditionally, the 'golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant' (Hebrews 9:4) were kept in the ark. Thus the icon frame in the Orthodox tradition was connected with the Old Testament tradition of concealment of holy objects and was considered as inviolable as the image itself. Thus, for example, the sawing down of the margins of an icon might be considered blasphemy in Russia as late as the eighteenth century, as witnessed by the accusations of blasphemy, between 1764 and 1767, levelled against a certain Iust, who trimmed down an icon with the intention of putting it into an iconostasis.[11]

This function of concealing the holy object was performed also by the metal overlay of the icon, its casing and curtain cloths. All these served

6 *Smolensk Mother of God*, *c.* 1250–1300.
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



as an 'ark' and 'adornment' for the sacred countenance, separating it out and protecting it within the surrounding space. Early Byzantine texts tell us that the original icon of Christ – the Saviour Not Made by Hands on a sacred shroud – was kept above the city gate of Edessa, wrapped in a white cloth and placed in a chest (that is, an ark or a case). This case had shutters that were opened only on certain days, inspiring in believers the sense of the sacred object's inviolability and protection from the eyes of outsiders:

> And since the ancient case for the holy image was closed with small doors, so that it should not be visible to all, where and when they might wish, twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, when the doors were closed and fastened by the most delicate fastenings that they call sceptres, the image would be viewed by all present and each person would honour its incomparable power with prayers. And it was not permitted that anyone should approach it, nor touch it with their lips nor gaze upon it, since from the increase of divine fear faith too becomes more timid and hesitates to render obeisance to that which is honoured.[12]

It was from Edessa that the tradition of installing an icon of the Saviour Not Made by Hands in a case above city gates and the entrance

7 Detail of the text of the prayer on the top-left margin.

into a church derives; this can be judged on the basis of many monuments, and in particular from the well-known church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo, about which we shall have more to say. Meanwhile, the Old Testament tradition insisted on the impossibility of representing God, and hence on the impenetrability of the 'frame' of the holy Face as a boundary between the visible and the invisible: 'God has not been seen by anyone, anywhere.' The truly revolutionary event was that Christianity, at least the branch of it that accepted icon veneration, permitted the potential crossing of that boundary. That is why we can say that the icon venerators united the Old Testament ark chest with the antique niche, taking from antiquity not just the forms of the icon frame, but also even certain philosophical ideas. This union was situated on the flexible boundary between the Byzantine theology of the image and iconoclastic Platonism, which insisted that the material image cannot conceivably render the glory of the supersensory divine beauty.

Plato, who lived in the fifth century BC, spoke out against illusionism in art. For him the distance between the visible world and the idea, or essence, was too great for a human being to present this idea visibly. Thus Plato arrived at denying the imitation of natural forms altogether. He made his denunciation of art in the tenth book of his *Republic*: the artist creates only deceptive and unreliable images, he leads people into error and sows chaos in their hearts.[13] Incidentally, Plato's idea first establishes itself in the artist's consciousness and even acquires ontological significance in the philosophy of Plotinus (AD 205–269/70). As Plotinus wrote, 'Phidias created his Zeus not according to some visible appearance, but as Zeus himself would have appeared if he had wished to reveal himself to us.' That is to say, the image of Zeus that the sculptor Phidias carried within himself was not only a conception of Zeus, but his essence. This meant that the idea of divine beauty acquired a super-real existence and objectivity that would in the future have the most important significance for establishing the nature of the Christian icon. However, Plotinus himself repudiated figurative portrayals, which is why he became popular in the twentieth century among adherents of abstract art. For him, as for modern abstractionists, frame and image were unnecessary: the world of visible images was incapable of including divine beauty: 'The original nature of the Beautiful has no form.'[14]

For that reason the current of thought in Christian theology deriving from Plato rejected icons of Christ, which in the period of Byzantine iconoclasm (726–843) were to become the object of bitter arguments. The abstract world of ornament, which directed human consciousness exclusively inwards, was often contrasted to the image of Christ by followers of this path. This kind of adornment of a Christian church gave prominence to the one symbol used – the cross – and essentially had no further function beyond symbolically locking it in on itself. Architectural and painterly decoration existed only to help overcome the world of visible images that formed a stumbling block on the way of pure contemplation, the inward turn of Plotinus. Iconoclast art was an art for the 'elect', just like the abstract art of the twentieth century. It was closer to the Monophysite ideal, and only the visible material frame and ornament remind us that the surrounding world is not totally forgotten.

In the dispute with the Iconoclasts Byzantine theology discovered not only a justification for sacred representation, but also a way of framing it. The ark as frame points in two directions: it is directed both to the centre – the image of Christ – and outwards, to the world itself and to humanity. The frame of an icon not only delimits the image of Christ within the surrounding space, but also links the two together. According to St John Damascene, the icon partakes more of the sacred than the worldly, since the incarnation of Christ redeemed its materiality. Hence the frame, as divinely appointed boundary between the sacred and the worldly, is orientated towards the centre. It is the threshold of perception, and thus carries the believer up towards God as if in the opposite direction to that by which grace descends. Here the Old Testament tradition of keeping sacredness away from unconsecrated eyes is clearly actualized.

Theodore, abbot of the monastery of Studion in Constantinople, found an explanation in which we see the most original resolution of the problem of framing the sacred image. The icon conveys neither the divine nor the human nature of Christ, but his hypostasis in which these two natures are united. Moreover, the icon itself has the same hypostasis as Christ. This meant that the icon was capable of fulfilling its preordained task only when the features of the Holy Countenance on it were not obscured, that is, when it bore the character of this hypostasis. The visible form is the framing of the invisible: the presence in the icon of recognizable features of Christ's countenance is the actual boundary between the divine and the human. Hence in both Byzantium and Rus' one icon might be renovated many times over, as has already been mentioned in connection with the major holy object of early Rus', the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God*. The rhetorical foundation of the image orientated consciousness towards making copies from the model and continually renovating it: the 'countenance' of the icon had to have recognizable features. In the present instance the 'model' was the Mother of God herself as she appeared in the given image, while the 'likenesses' are all the subsequent renewals and imitations, that is to say correspondences and similarities of the material form to the divine essence. From this it followed that the material resemblance itself of the image (in visible form, scheme or iconographic type) relates rather to the world, which in Christ's words is the 'footstool' of the Creator: 'But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool' (Matthew 5:34–5).

Doubt about the excessive degree of sacredness attributed to the icon was expressed by Patriarch Nicephoros, who rejected the concept of the image as partaking of the essence of the prototype. In this way he diminished its worth, while opening up greater possibilities of linking it with the world and humanity. He declared that the image is only a likeness, and actualized the Old Testament desire to see God. It was he who cited the disembodied angels as an example that gave a more precise direction to the boundary between the sacred and the worldly, not only within the icon, but outside, towards the 'world'. The iconoclasts always maintained that angels could not be depicted. To this Patriarch Nicephoros replied that artists delineate the disembodied angels because people passionately wish to see them. This position served to give particular profundity to the framing of Christ. It is no accident that on the frame of an

icon – the threshold of the perception of the divine countenance – we often see inscribed the words of a prayer (or a donor inscription): echoes of the human desire to come closer to it, the passionate wish to witness it. One of the earliest Russian works of art is the *Smolensk Mother of God* in a frame covered with the words of a prayer (second half of the thirteenth century, Tretyakov Gallery, illus. 6, 7).[15] In a certain sense the frame plays the role here of spatial meeting ground between a distant God and the sinful human being. For that reason portrayals of the sacred donors are situated on the frames of many Byzantine and Russian icons; they are intercessors before God for the earthly sins of human beings. They are intermediaries between the sacred and the profane. It is therefore on their labour and intercession that sinful humanity rests its hopes.

In the Mirror of Perspective

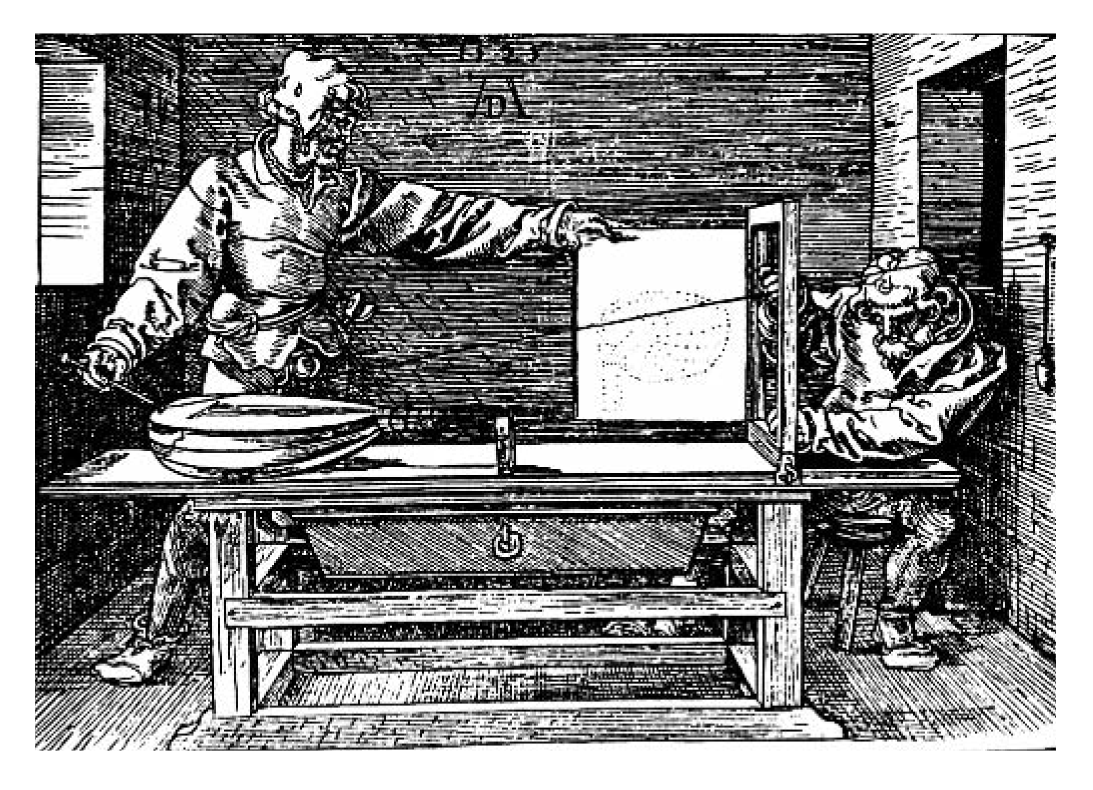
Until Pavel Florensky published his article 'Reverse Perspective' in 1920, and Erwin Panofsky published his remarkable work *Perspective as Symbolic Form* in 1923, artists, historians and art lovers in general had long assumed that the Renaissance picture was a window into the real world.[16] Independently of each other, though simultaneously, the two scholars concluded that linear perspective from a single viewpoint and with proportionately reduced lines of vision is only a symbolic form. The transfer of a three-dimensional object to the two-dimensional surface of a picture in itself dictates the conventionality of the Renaissance image, the way the depiction is dependent on the rules of perspectival construction of drawing. Thus was revealed the symbolic unity of the window-like frame ('frame-as-window') and the perspectival representation, which was subjected to an entirely new rhetorical task – the creation of an illusion of reality. But why was it this particular frame construction that was affirmed and acquired so great a significance in European culture for almost half a millennium? It was because from the epoch of the Renaissance the emphasis in the psychology of the perception of the picture firmly shifted away from the sacred representation (of Christ or a saint) onto humanity, its cognitive rationality, the perceiving consciousness itself.

The frame-as-window is the 'ego' of the perceiving subject, its 'devouring' of the surrounding world and transformation of it into an object of cognition, since linear perspective, with which this frame was directly linked, presumed a single viewpoint as one of its chief conditions. Hence the artistic space of the perspectival picture acquired a series of new, hidden qualities. On an icon the image is set up as if on a blank wall. Thus the icon is the world itself. In a picture the image is constructed as if in the transparent glass of a window. For that reason the Renaissance picture is only a part of the world. An icon's model of the world does not permit the illusion of a spectator's entry into it. A person stands before an icon with the utmost respect and accepts the world as it is. The model of the Renaissance picture, on the contrary, creates the illusion of a transition from the real world to a hypothetical world, and makes the person accept the world as it seems. It forces one to apprehend this world by means of comparison with perfect and absolute forms, 'conquered' by the artist within the surrounding space.[17] Hence the Renaissance frame-as-window is a 'forced harmony' of the spectator's perception. The frame

proposes that the human being should identify the space of the picture with the familiar space of the real world. As a result, the world of depiction becomes a model of the real world for the spectator, insofar as the limitlessness of the surrounding world can be fitted within the flat rectangular surface demarcated by the frame.

In other words this frame answers to the concept of 'world as image', which according to Heidegger is 'the presentation of the existing'. With the help of the frame a person places in front of, and for, himself or herself an 'image of the world'.[18] Thanks to the regular rules by which an object is projected onto the surface of a picture (on the principle of Alberti's well-known pyramid), the spectator is made not to notice how the visible world, so familiar to us, is transformed. How then does this take place?

The optical and perspectival experiments of Filippo Brunelleschi and the rules for setting out linear perspective expounded in the treatise on painting by Leon Battista Alberti (1435) proposed the imitation by painterly means of the three-dimensional spatial image. Alberti also defined the painting as an open 'window'. The meaning of his famous visual pyramid consisted in his projecting the imagined pyramid of light rays onto a representational surface that functioned as if it were the transparent glass of a window. On this surface he constructed with the help of no longer imaginary, but actual lines a second pyramid symmetrical with the first. In this way the scheme of optical perception turned into a scheme of visual representation. An anonymous biographer thus described Alberti's invention, which prefigured the camera obscura and was



8 Albrecht Dürer, 'Portula Optica', engraving from *Principles of Measurement* (1525).

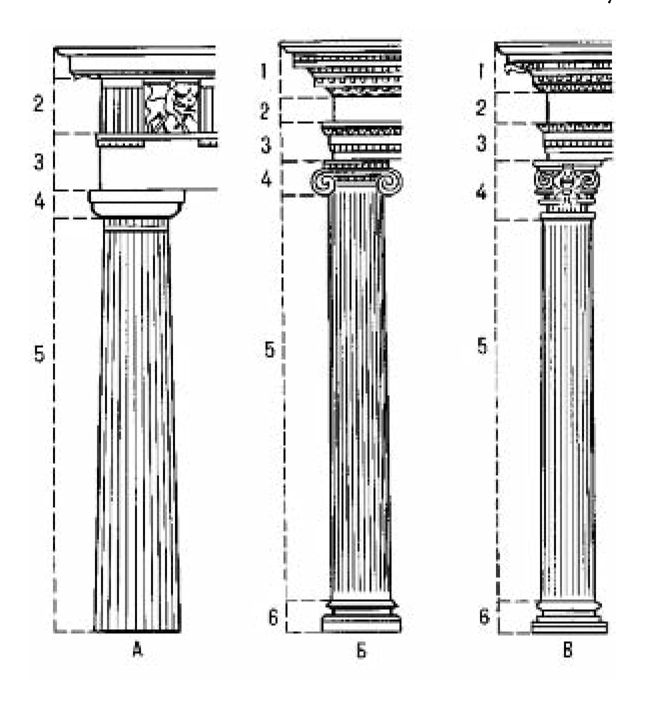
forever to link his name with the discovery of linear perspective:

> He wrote a brief treatise about painting in several books, and in so doing established for the spectator something new and unheard of with the help of painting: through a tiny opening in a small box it was possible to see great mountains, extensive lands, a broad gulf of the sea, and in the background such distant lands that they would hardly be visible to the naked eye. He named these things 'demonstrations', and they were so made that both knowledgeable and ignorant people would assert that they were seeing not something painted, but the actual objects themselves.[19]

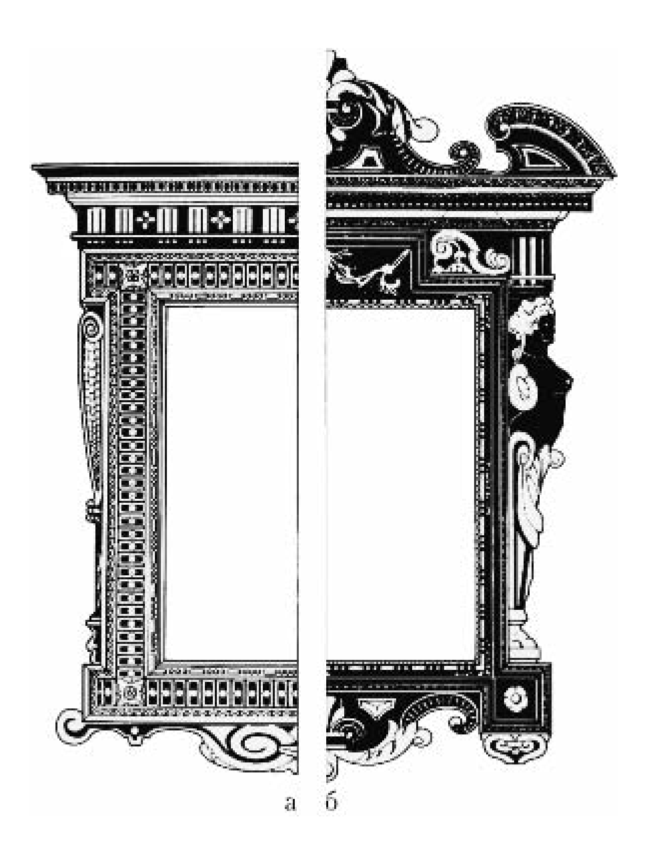
Hence both linear perspective and the Renaissance window-like frame can be regarded as the direct result of the union of science and art. They appear in fifteenth-century Florence in an atmosphere of heightened interest in optics – the science of visual perception, already well known to antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the first half of the fifteenth century what was understood by this term was *perspectiva naturalis* – medieval optical theory; and only in the second half of the Quattrocento did people begin to mean by it the linear perspective now familiar to us, the way to represent three-dimensional space on a flat surface, that is to say *perspectiva artificialis*.

With the appearance of a new Quattrocento conception of the picture there also appears a new conception of the frame, reminiscent now of the frame of a mirror or window aperture in a wall. Inseparably linked with the picture itself and with the new method of perspectival structuring of a composition, the form of the frame was intended to strengthen the illusion that the painterly surface was transparent, since it was located on the boundary of the visual field, that is between the object delineated on the picture and the eye. The frame eased the process of apprehending the picture that was put forward for contemplation, since it was structured as if a reflection in a mirror or a view through a window. Thus the mirror with all its illusionistic possibilities emerged as the prime instrument for new optical demonstrations. After all, a reflection in a mirror was considered an important part of perspective. Therefore the frames of Renaissance pictures are sometimes hard to tell apart from the frames of Renaissance mirrors.[20]

In the Renaissance period perspective became not only a new method of artistic representation, but also a new principle for seeing the world. The criterion of authenticity in this visual experience



9 The architectural orders: (a) Doric, (b) Ionic, (c) Corinthian.





became the human eye – that very visual perception, with all its optical distortions, that medieval theologians (who well knew the laws of optics) condemned as profane and sinful. There was no place for optical illusions in the medieval system of values embodied in the Byzantine icon or Gothic altarpiece. This was precisely the analytical point of view on perspective that was first taken by Pavel Florensky, for whom the Renaissance picture was 'deceit' and 'a barrier blocking out the light of existence', while the icon was 'a window wide open on reality', that is, a world of authentic rather than counterfeit essences and values.[21] As he wrote,

> Representations that project themselves beyond the framed surface, painterly naturalism that reaches the point of 'grasping it with one's hand'; imitation of external noises in music; 'factography' in poetry, etc. – in general any substitution of art by an imitation of nature is a crime both against life and against art.[22]

Surveying linear perspective in classical Greece at the time of Plato, and also in mural paintings of first-century AD villas at Pompeii, the Russian philosopher regarded it as no less than the 'Baroque of antiquity', whose aim was to 'deceive' the viewer.[23] Different aspects of perspective from ancient times alternated with each other in art, depending on the demands of religion and culture. Thus an image constructed according to linear perspective and imitating reality is just as remote from it as is

10 Diagram of mid-16th-century Renaissance tabernacle frames: (a) Venetian frame in Mannerist style, (b) Tuscan 'Sansovino' frame.

11 Desiderio da Settignano, *Virgin and Child*, relief in tabernacle. Bode Museum, Berlin.

any other, since mimesis is not absolute. Explaining his position, Florensky wrote: 'Different means of representation differ one from another not as an object does from its representation, but on a symbolic plane.'[24]

This conventionality in the perspectival construction of the world was affirmed by the very optical instruments that were described and depicted in Albrecht Dürer's *Principles of Measurement* (Nuremberg, 1525, illus. 8). Since these all contained framing structures, Florensky's observations on the dependence of perspective on a world view also affected the problem of the frame. Explaining the construction of these contraptions for drawing, Florensky tried to demonstrate that the image obtained with their assistance was not the result of a 'visual synthesis', but of geometric calculation:

> Dürer's third instrument already bears no relation to vision: the centre of projection is here realized not through the eye, even were it to be artificially rendered immobile, but through a certain point on a wall, at which point a small ring is attached with a long thread tied to it. The latter almost reaches to a frame with glass in it, standing vertically on the table. The thread is stretched, and an optical tube is attached to it, directing the 'visual ray' to the point on the object projected from the place where the thread is fastened. Then it is not hard to make a mark on the glass with a pen or a brush corresponding to the projected point. Subsequently, taking a sight on various points of the object, the draughtsman can project it onto the glass, though not 'from a point of view', but 'from a point of the wall'; vision here plays only a subsidiary role.[25]

In showing that such drawing was merely a geometric system, Florensky attempted to link his criticism of Renaissance perspective with a criticism of the humanism and anthropocentrism of the Age of Enlightenment, and also with a 'Kantian' world view, which for him meant nothing other than viewing the world as a field for scientific experiments.

Another scholar who came to the conclusion that different systems of perspective were inseparable from historical ways of seeing the world was Erwin Panofsky. For him perspective merely reflected a defined system of value judgements, since it was conditioned by historical conceptions of space. Panofsky's work, which influenced practically all studies of perspective in the twentieth century, was of course itself written under the influence of the neo-Kantian ideas of Ernst Cassirer, who understood representative form as a symbol, linked with the problem of the mental image.[26] For that reason Panofsky, defining perspective as symbolic form, analysed philosophical theories of space and the metaphysics of light within pagan and Christian Neoplatonism, which allowed him to come to a deeper understanding of



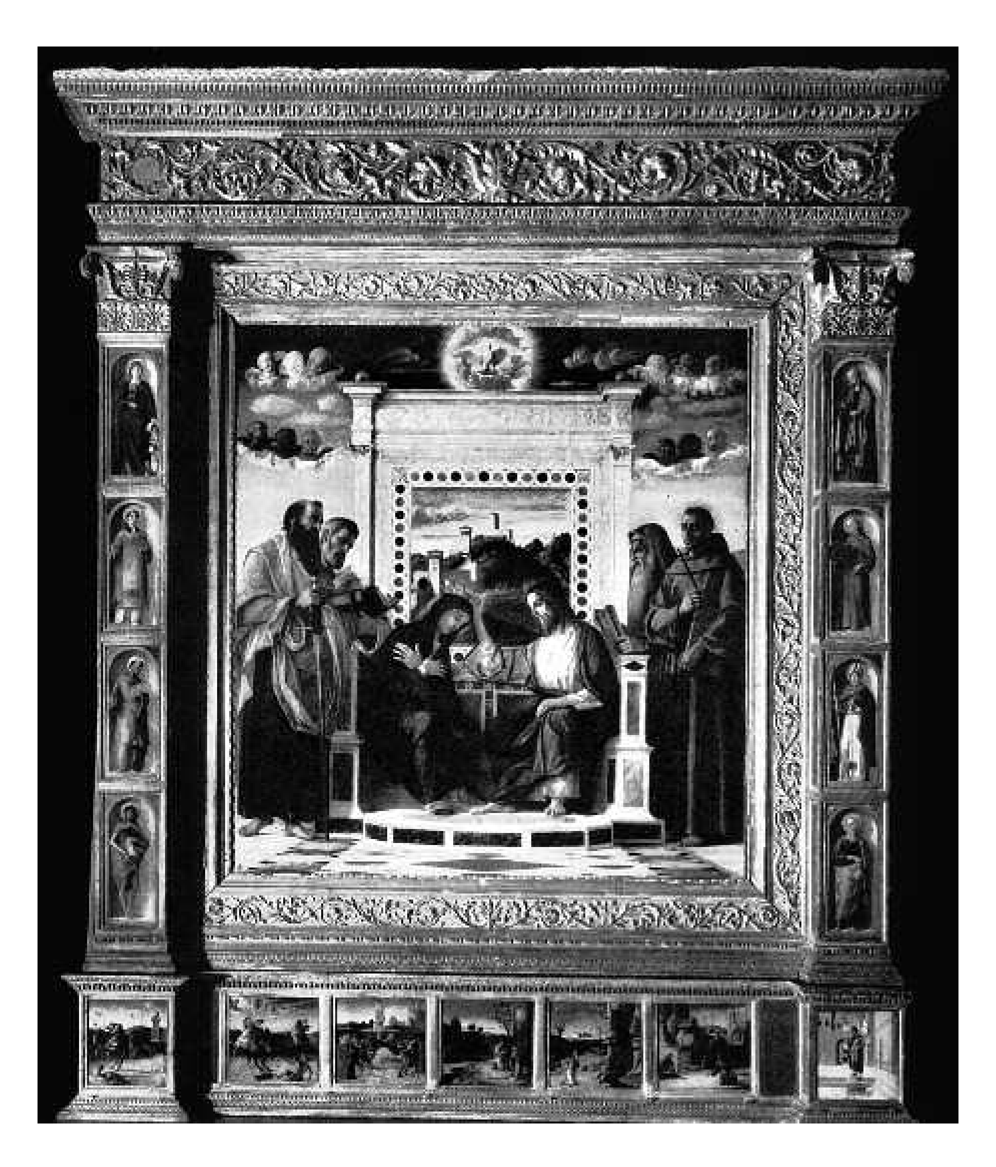
12 Sebastiano del Piombo, *Virgin and Child, with Saints and Donor*, *c.* 1519–20, in a type of *cassetta* frame of the Sienese school. National Gallery, London.



the Renaissance picture. The ancient theoreticians did not understand space as a series of relations between height, width and depth. For them what was important was to envisage the object not within a system of coordinates, but in its entirety. The world was perceived by them in discrete parts, deprived of its continuity.[27] However, the medieval space was a concept of space of the 'closed interior' and 'closed window', in consequence of which figures and objects in medieval representation appear to be 'glued' to a blank wall. In comparison with this medieval space, the space of the Renaissance picture was a homogeneous and measurable space. It displays its ability to be endlessly prolonged and shows itself to be inseparably linked with objects and bodies. Now space was understood as a system of interrelationships of height, width and depth, and in conjunction with this the world appears as measurable in Renaissance art. This concept of space was prepared for in the Gothic period, as the relief of the *Last Supper* in Naumburg Cathedral bears witness. The deep, arc-shaped framing of the scene seems to cut a deep spatial zone into the wall, reminiscent of a theatrical stage, and so reveals a striving for unity between the figures and the milieu they inhabit.[28] The view through a window, closed off in the period of antiquity, has once again been opened, and the picture has become 'a discrete segment of endless space'. In Panofsky's opinion it was this that constituted the meaning of the revolution in painting brought about by Duccio and Giotto, who came to a new comprehension of the pictorial surface. Henceforth the picture ceased to be perceived as a 'wall' or a 'board' carrying the forms of individual figures and objects. Its surface acquired the properties of transparent glass, which in turn demanded a frame in the form of a window.

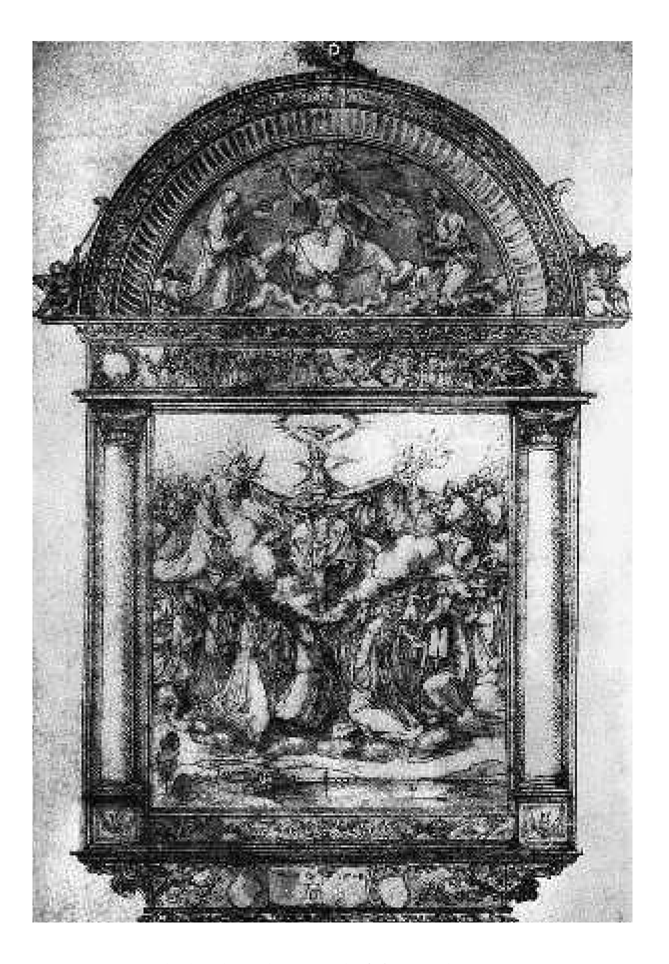
In connection with all this, by the middle of the fifteenth century in Italy the frame of an altar image was gradually losing the form of a medieval basilica and acquiring that of the façade of an antique temple, including the component elements of the classical architectural order system – the well-defined compositional combination of load-bearing and other parts of an ancient building. As we know, the ancient order system included load-bearing parts (the base and column with capital) and those they carried (architrave, frieze and cornice, which constituted the entablature). The three types of order system devised in ancient Greece (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian) had wide dissemination in the architecture of ancient Rome, the Renaissance and Neoclassicism (illus. 9). In fifteenth-century Italy the order system first attracted serious interest with Brunelleschi. Thereafter the works of Vitruvius began to be studied, and subsequently notable architectural treatises by Alberti, Palladio and Vignola appeared.[29] Their particular significance for the development of the Renaissance frame rests in the fact that the antique

13 *Virgin with Child, John the Baptist and Angel*, *c.* 1460, in a tondo-type frame of the Florentine school. National Gallery, London.



idea of beauty as harmony, which in formal respects found its expression in the theory of proportionality of artistic form, is revived in them. It was this situation that in the Renaissance led also to the birth of artistic autonomy and the appearance of aesthetics as the science of the beautiful, independent of ethics and religion. For that reason the frame with its elements of the antique order system served as an indicator of the classical canon for attaining finished and perfected forms. The classically beautiful art of the ancient world was taken into the service of the Christian Church. We must note straight away that this type of frame was to appear in Russian culture only in the second half of the seventeenth century, and would show that the new type of Russian icon was regarded as art in the modern sense. Its artistic system would thereafter develop on the basis of antique and Renaissance ideals of beauty.

14 Giovanni Bellini, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1471–4, altarpiece for S. Francesco in Pesaro. Museo Civico, Pesaro.



Meanwhile, by the mid-fifteenth century two more types of Renaissance frame – *cassetta* and *tondo* – also appeared in Italy. The word *cassetta* means a little box or case. The designation cassetta for frames, universally accepted in Western scholarship, implies the well-known quadrilateral frames of baton type that derived from the structure of a tabernacle; whereas the tondo type is a frame in the form of a circle with flattened margins, covered with ornamentation (illus. 12, 13).[30] Such forms were widespread throughout Europe, engendering all sorts of national variants. But how and why did they arise? Specialists consider that the question of the existence of secular framing before the fifteenth century is rather controversial, given that the sacred and the worldly tended to mingle. And it is into this vision of the world that the secular tradition would bring an entirely novel phenomenon within European culture: portraits of admittedly notable, but all the same ordinary simple human beings. For that reason the cultural concept 'picture frame' appears in the history of European art only when secular portraiture is being disseminated. First of all they were painted on boards with integral margins, and might be kept in special boxes or be meshed into the fabric of walls or furnishings, which could consequently be regarded as the early framing of secular portraits. Later, secular portraits could be hung on the walls of a bedroom, which Alberti, for example, regarded as the safest and most convenient place to keep painterly works.[31] Later still they would start to be painted on canvas, which would be put into a separate frame. In Italy and the Netherlands such portraits arose as early as the 1430s, in the second half of the same century in France, at its end in Germany. At the same time poetry, painting and sculpture migrated from the category of lowly trades into that of the liberal arts, while the artist and his work acquired a new, higher status within the system. His work was likened to that of nature, since he created new entities. A picture painted in the system of direct perspective was called upon not so much to reflect objective reality as to express a subjective response to it. Therefore by the end of the Quattrocento it would break its links with the liturgy, which would lead to the appearance of a new symbolism and rhetorical function of the frame; and this new 'independent' frame would be born as a result of the dissolution of the structure of the Gothic altar.

15 Albrecht Dürer, An altarpiece, 1508, drawing. Musée Condé, Chantilly.

Here the tabernacle, echoing the form of the antique temple, had particular significance. It became the chief form of framing for the type of picture called *sacra conversazione* (sacred conversation), with its illusionism and direct perspective. The architectural forms of the tabernacle symbolized the Heavenly House or a Christian church, embodying the model of the universe and built according to the ancient rules of harmonious construction. Thus the relief by Desiderio da Settignano of the *Virgin and Child* is housed in a frame that imitates an architectural composition: its side parts are treated as pilasters with bases and Corinthian capitals, while the upper part represents an entablature, consisting of the architrave, frieze and cornice of the classical order system (illus. 10, 11). In imitation of 'the great picture of Nature', the artist accords the human appearance of the Mother and Christ Child the perfection flowing from the gift of ideal beauty that God had granted them. In its frame this ideal world acquires purity and completeness. The perfection of the human aspect and nature is emphasized by the perfection of the frame, embodying the classical canons of beauty.

The famous altar image by Giovanni Bellini of the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Museo Civico, Pesaro) demonstrates that the form of the Renaissance tabernacle with elements of classical architectural orders opened up a new epoch in the interactions between frame and picture (illus. 14). The frame was inextricably linked with linear perspective (*perspectiva artificialis*) and answered to the demands of humanist anthropology – it allowed the human gaze to encompass the fullness of the universe. For that reason Bellini structured his picture according to all the rules of perspectival foreshortening of the orthogonals, giving the effect of an architectural niche, into which the scene of the coronation of the Virgin Mary was placed. The niche itself serves as an illusionistic window frame, within which the *veduta* is painted.

In that way the frame belonging to the real world and the frame depicted in the painting indicated the endless extension of space, which has an uninterrupted link with the figures and objects located within it. It indeed confirms the Renaissance concept of perfection as *varietà* ('variegation').[32] For that reason if the picture attempts to represent the macrocosm as a whole, then the frame embraces its unity with a 'contour of harmony', correlating individual and disparate things of whatever kind with the antique ideal of beauty. In the process it strengthens the illusionism of the painting, since its link with the picture is expressed through a mathematically structured perspective, strictly orientated on the viewpoint of the spectator. Evidently it was this that gave its fundamental meaning to the Renaissance tabernacle, with its architectural composition within whose space many currents of knowledge and thought came together.[33] Its classical forms pointed clearly to a new cultural orientation – the revival of ancient rhetoric and Neoplatonist philosophy, and together with them the canons of antique art; in particular the revival of the ancient teaching on the connection between architecture and the proportions of the human body. The frame as it were subjected the representation to defined laws of harmony, which were explained by rhetoric, that is the concrete methods for persuasion and for making an effect on the spectator's consciousness.

The classic forms of the frame could also be connected with a reconfiguration of the Platonic

'idea'. In Plato the divine idea is too remote from reality. In the Renaissance period the demand arose to bring it closer to humanity. Now it would be awarded a place in human consciousness, and its identification with an artistic concept took place; the Platonic idea is envisaged as the highest image of beauty that is born in the artist's consciousness.[34] Moreover, according to Renaissance aesthetic theory the artistic idea precedes the form of a work, just as in the visual consciousness the frame precedes the representation itself.

From this we can reasonably deduce that a frame in the form of an antique temple could fully indicate the embodiment of that artistic idea, or that ideal image of divine beauty that the artist had been thought to carry within himself from as long ago as the time of Plotinus, as we have seen. That to say it had become a sign of the perfected embodiment in a picture of an artistic concept of the world. Since the task of Renaissance art was the unmediated imitation of reality, the artist emerged as rival of Nature; he could correct its imperfections thanks to that image of perfect beauty that he had discovered within himself as a God-given gift. Nobody even demanded a holy way of life from him, as would have been the case in the Orthodox East: whatever his morals, thanks to this heavenly gift he was the connecting link between divine beauty and the crafted image.

It was just this embodiment of the divine idea that was much assisted by the frame, which not only obliged the viewer to see the world in the way in which it was represented in the picture, but essentially dictated to the artist his choice of means for this representation. It is no accident that personages on Renaissance pictures and portraits so often point to something or someone located outside the picture frame. They sometimes 'go beyond' the limits of frames and parapets, which in such cases can be endowed with a mystical function.[35]

All these devices and rules were also dictated by the theory of art that arose in the fifteenth century, and is persuasively expounded in the famous treatises of Alberti, Leonardo and Dürer in which the essence of beauty was regarded as that harmony of proportions whose ideal embodiment was painting: 'the flower of all the arts'.[36] Leonardo da Vinci, like Alberti, compared a picture to a mirror, in which all the variety of divine Nature was reflected. The artist's consciousness too was likened to a mirror, which would take up as many images as were 'set against him': 'The artist's mind must be like to a mirror, that always converts into light that which it possesses in the role of an object, and fills itself with as many images as there are objects set against it.'[37] We find the same in Dürer, who sometimes devoted no less attention to the frames of his pictures than to the particular nature of their perspectival structure.[38] This is witnessed by his sketches for altarpieces, whose ideal proportions are emphasized by the antique beauty of their framing (illus. 15). In other words, in the Quattrocento period there emerged not only a separate material frame, but also a separate speculative and conceptual frame – the autonomous aesthetic theory of mimesis linked to it. Thus from being an inseparable part of the Gothic altarpiece the frame had turned into a means for the cognition of surrounding reality. The frame had become an instrument for revealing a simulacrum of the world to its Prototype. The picture frame, linear perspective and Renaissance aesthetic theory would come to Russia together with Latin

and Western Baroque rhetoric and poetics, thanks to which the chief holy object of Muscovite Rus' – the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God* (illus. 1) – would be given new meaning within a new system of likeness.

Rhetoric and the New Icon

The rhetoric of the frame of both the Byzantine and the Old Russian icon is determined by its basis in antiquity. It was the culture of antiquity that presented Byzantium with one of the most effective instruments for organizing human thought: rhetoric; that is to say certain mental constructs whose use was necessitated by the universal significance of Christianity for the organization of Byzantine civilization. The ancient philosophers, orators and artists, armed with rhetoric, made no attempt to guard their wisdom jealously, but on the contrary did all they could to render what they knew about the righteous path clear, attractive and accessible. Rhetoric helped to persuade people of truth and to touch their hearts and minds. For this reason the rhetorical impulse constituted the inner framework of Christian culture. From the start, however, Western and Eastern Christendom resolved the problem of the image in somewhat different ways that were to have great importance in determining the pathways along which later Christian art would develop. In the Byzantino-Slav world, including Muscovite Russia, the icon was conceived of as belonging to the realm of metaphysics rather than that of rhetoric. It was the major symbol of Christianity, witness to truth and to the 'presence' in the world of Christ and the saints. Thus it was enveloped with a special respect and reverence. In the West, on the contrary, the image had a modest status. The image was a 'Bible for simple people', which had to instruct, to touch hearts and to bring pleasure; its role was limited to the defence of the Christian mission. And that relatively modest status of the cult image in Catholic culture was determined by the scholastic tradition. The quest for truth was given over to scholasticism, not to the picture, for which it was too large and complex. If the picture were to enter into a dispute with theology, it would lose its quality of spectacle and visual persuasiveness, and as a result its representational effect and the task it was set: actively to affect the human mind and heart. Because it was this that seemed its greatest task, Western Latin rhetoric with its five divisions (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, *pronuntatio*) as early as the fifteenth century began to admit the use of the most varied artistic means in the image. Among them was sculpture in the round, forbidden in the Christian East, also music, and those effects of light and colour that today seem so striking in the grandiose structures of Western altarpieces. Finally, they also included linear perspective and framing that related the perception of the image to the human gaze, to the growing role in it of personality and individuality.

After it accepted Christianity, early Russia of course adopted the Byzantine rhetorical tradition, which formed the basis of both its writing and its icon painting. This underlay too the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God*, brought to Kiev from Constantinople in the twelfth century. However, in the Old Russian context Byzantine rhetoric did not become a scholarly discipline, as took place in the Catholic world.[39] It was the icon that strove to become speculative philosophy, and not the book.

Requiring to be gazed at too long and too fixedly, the Russian icon attempted to be a kind of theological means for attaining truth, although in the process it also attained a rare degree of elegance and purity. Meanwhile, with the appearance in Muscovite Russia during the second half of the seventeenth century of Western Latin rhetoric and Renaissance aesthetic theory, a new and formerly unwitnessed critical attitude towards the medieval model was formulated. In essence the appearance of a new rhetoric means the appearance of a new universal cultural mechanism. The central idea of this new rhetoric was belief in the universality of rules. Thus once planted in the local soil of medieval Russian culture, rhetoric in its Latin variant acquired, one may suppose, the function of normative guidance, creating new rules not only for the literary and visual text, but also even for social behaviour up to the end of the eighteenth century.[40] This introduction of rhetoric in the form of universal cultural guidance meant no less than the replacement in Muscovite Russia of a whole cultural tradition, which found widespread reflection in the realm of visual culture. At first, of course, the process of absorbing rhetoric got under way in the Ukrainian and Belorussian cultural milieux. Classical scholasticism with its 'seven liberal sciences' (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) was taught in the Peter Mogila College in Kiev, in 'brotherhood schools' and other educational establishments. But as early as 1665 Simeon Polotsky had opened a school in the Moscow Zaikonospassky Monastery, while in 1686 the Greek Likhud brothers founded the Moscow Slav-Greek-Latin Academy. An education of the European type was given in these establishments. During the seventeenth century various textbooks of rhetoric were disseminated in dozens of copies.

It is thought that the first manifestation of Baroque artistic principles and of the new – for Russia – aesthetic theory came with the poetics of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbewski (1595–1640), Emanuele Tesauro (1591–1675), Daniello Bartoli (1608–1685), Bal'tazar Grasian (1601–1658) and some others. The earliest copies of the first Russian *Rhetoric* are dated 1620. It was based on a translation of the *Rhetoric* by the German scholar Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), which had been published at Frankfurt in 1577. The unknown translator, who knew both Latin and Greek, translated the text word for word, but substituted Russian for Latin names and introduced his own examples.[41] The abundance of copies testifies to the book's popularity in Russia. Particular interest is also attached to the volume *The Key to Understanding* by Ioannikiy Galyatovsky, which first came out in Kiev in 1659 and was translated ten years later in Muscovite Russia. Besides literary works, the book contains a rhetorical tract called 'The Science of Composing Speeches', which is essentially a practical guide to writing sermons.[42] It gives a detailed account of the structure and stylistic adornments of oratorical works, the interrelationship of parts and the means of introducing expressive examples. The individual points made were also close to the recommendations in Bal'tazar Gracian's book *Wit; or, The Art of the Subtle Mind*.[43] At the end of the seventeenth century there appeared a tract by Andrey Belobotsky and the *Rhetoric* of Sofroniy Likhud, translated from Greek by the monk Cosmas of the Chudov Monastery (1698). It is important to emphasize throughout that in all these works there were special sections where these devices and methods of persuading

readers and listeners were discussed. As we would say nowadays, they posed the problem of communication. Thus rhetoric in the hands of Baroque theoreticians often turned into philosophy, since it impinged on theory of knowledge.

To arouse (*movere*), to instruct (*docere*) and to entertain (*delectare*) were the three main purposes of the teaching of rhetoric. It was to the attainment of these goals that the complicated system of artistic methods – on which orators, writers and artists relied to make their works vivid and persuasive – corresponded. The careful description in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works on poetics and rhetoric of the techniques of *inventio* (content), *dispositio* (arrangement) and *elocutio* (stylization) essentially served as instructions not only for composing the texts of sermons, panegyrics, verses and plays, but also for the creation of visual images – icons, portraits, pictures and colophons. This was the more apparent since it was the rhetorical organization of culture that from the time of Tsar Aleksey (*reg* 1645–76) stimulated the beginnings of the genre system both in literary and representational activity. Alongside the new icon there appeared the official portrait (*parsuna*), the historical painting, various forms of graphic art, and a little later landscape and battle scenes. The genre system created the possibility of separating out various kinds of representation. But the process of its formation inevitably involved mutual influences, interactions and mixed representational types, giving rise to a conscious play of meanings.

Particular significance was attributed to teachings about content (*inventio*) and stylization (*elocutio*). The latter included all the categories that rhetoric could propose for transformation of the model: addition (*adjectio*), subtraction (*detractio*), transposition (*transmutatio*) and substitution (*immutatio*). We must suppose that it was just these categories that could have seriously influenced the Baroque artist's concept of the role of the frame in the treatment of the work of art, whether a book's frontispiece, a poetic text or an icon. Though subject to the peculiarities of one or another rhetorical rule, framing complicated its meaning, commented on it from various points of view, and related it to other forms of art. All this happened thanks to the fact that, unlike the symbol, metaphor, which lay at the foundation of the Renaissance and Baroque view of the world, always strove to 'draw up to the surface' the hidden meanings of the sign, to clarify it through broadening its context. The essence, the very purpose of the framing of a Renaissance/Baroque image, which so often appears in the role of commentary on it or point of comparison with it, consists in just this. And as such it invariably led to a deepened comprehension of reality, striving to reveal the invisible essence of that object of contemplation that lay within.

All these tendencies, characteristic of the Catholic cultural sphere, were taken up and adapted to local cultural demands in Muscovite Russia during the second half of the seventeenth century. From that time the Russian icon ceased to be available to unmediated perception: it began to belong to the realm of the imagination, of sensed experience, and also of special 'scholarly' knowledge. In this connection we invariably find icon painting taken both as a traditional craft (particularly among the Old Believers) and as a free 'art', that is, autonomous and mimetic. In the first case the religious image was perceived as a truth imposed upon the mind from outside, and

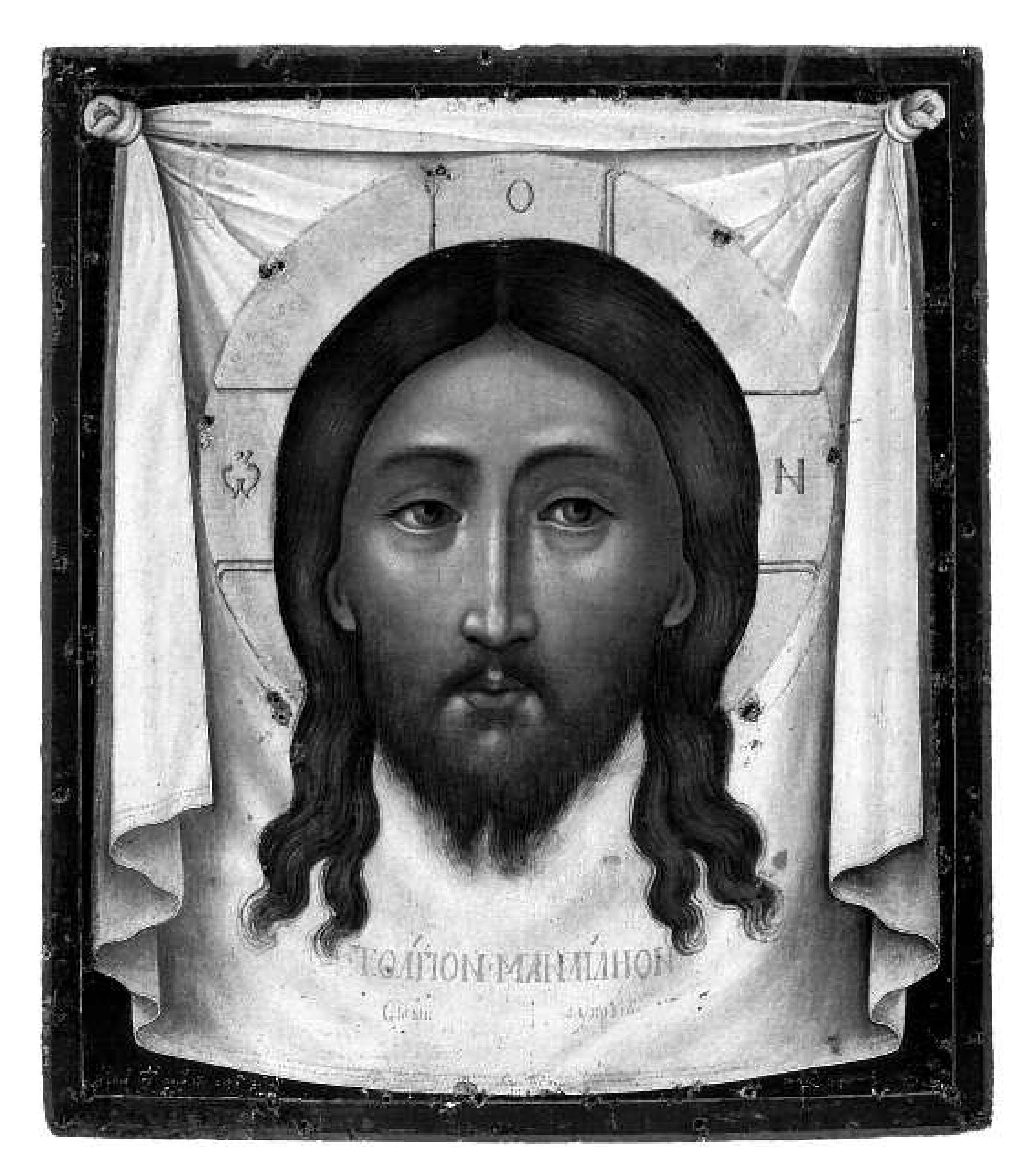
revealed only to the Holy Fathers, not to the icon painter whose role was to bear witness to it. So the traditional craft continued to follow ancient models and copybooks. In the second case the spectator was made to search for the artistic purpose within the image, that is, for the interpretation of artistic truth. This new type of Russian icon was also a synthesis of ancient devotion and the modern European (or Renaissance) understanding of the image, which opened a new path in Russian art. In sum, the problem of the spectator's perception was for the first time raised before the Russian icon painter: the old icons ceased to satisfy the demands of the imagination.

If we look at the problem through the eyes of the artists themselves, it all becomes more concrete. In his 'Discourse for one who would be diligent in icon painting', Simon Ushakov (1626–1686), chief icon painter of the Armoury Palace under Tsar Aleksey, spoke of his 'talent that came from the Lord God', and his calling to create an 'alphabet of artistry', that is, an anatomical atlas of the human figure:

> So possessing from the Lord God a talent for the painting of icons, given to me in my unworthiness that I could profit by it, I wished not to hide it in the earth, so as not to be judged for that, but took pains with my skill in icon painting to reveal the alphabet of this artistry, that is to say all parts of the human body, to the service of the various demands of our artfulness as might be variously needed, and to inscribe it on copper plates, so that the image might be more skilfully printed, for the benefit of all those who would be diligent in this honourable skill.[44]

In the same tract we find the metaphor of the mirror, which the artist uses not so much for a medieval illustration of the interdependence of the visible with the invisible, as for the understanding of icon painting as a painterly art, that is, as the basis of a new aesthetic theory of mimetic representation. It was at this time that there arose the term 'art' (*zhivopis'*, painting 'as if from life'), as well as the concept of the 'intelligent gaze' of the artist.[45] Thus in a tract by another of the tsar's painters, Iosif Vladimirov, the icon painter is endowed with a special 'wisdom', intellect and divine 'illumination', surpassing those around him.[46]

Thus beneath the mantle of traditional beliefs a quite new conception of art was being constructed, in which the category of beauty was achieving autonomy. In the Middle Ages beauty was a specifically transcendental matter and led beyond the framework of sensory perception. Now, at the edge of the modern age, it was given over to the artist's consciousness, which called forth the concept of art in the modern sense of the word, that is, as the creation of a work for aesthetic pleasure. Its foundation stone was a new rhetoric and a new theory of art, in which the 'alphabet of art' in Simon Ushakov's interpretation – a compendium of rules of proportionality, in harmony with the mode of visual perception – was a component part. As a result the Old Russian icon gradually turned into a Renaissance or Baroque mimetic image, whose illusion of three-dimensional space also presupposes the presence of a window-like frame as an inalienable part of an integrated visual system. We shall speak in more detail about the birth of the picture frame in Russian art. Meanwhile, it is important for us to make clear that it is from this point on that the



Russian icon as an art form started to claim an independent aesthetic task for itself, while the 'most wise' artist – such as Simon Ushakov in the eyes of his contemporaries, in particular Iosif Vladimirov, seemed to be – became possessor and guardian of divine beauty. He it was who created a fundamentally new (for its time) version of the 'first icon' – the image of *Christ Not Made by Hands* (illus. 16) – the basis for whose beauty was not a gift from God, rather the craftsman's free choices. Transforming a lifelike face into a divine countenance, the icon painter, like artists of the Renaissance period,

16 Simon Ushakov, *Christ Not Made by Hands*, 1673. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



17 Afanasiy Trukhmensky, 'King David as Psalmist', frontispiece to a rhymed Psalter by Simeon Polotsky (1680).

worked in cooperation with nature, and as a result of this created a 'second nature' that was already subject to the laws of harmony. The same could also be said about the drawing by Simon Ushakov showing King David as psalmist, from which the famous engraving by Afanasiy Trukhmensky was made (illus. 17). The illusionism of its three-dimensional space answers to the problem of visual perception and of free intentionality, which became the major qualities of the modern icon. The new icon continued to conceal within itself the power to transform reality. But the strength of its action upon the surrounding world was the strength of art itself, of which the representational artist had taken possession. It was from this that art, in becoming an autonomous sphere of activity, showed itself to be the way by which the transformative idea of absolute beauty came to humankind.

This is clearly seen if we take the example of the curtain or veil (a symbolic 'frame') of the sacred image. The medieval icon was veiled (in an ark or under cladding) in the same way that authentic existence or beauty were concealed and inaccessible to human imagination. By contrast, the new Russian icons from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth more and more often contain half-opened curtains that no longer conceal truth from the eyes of the unsanctified, but serve as coverings to those zealous in the pursuit of the truth that the artist had skilfully 'veiled'. A characteristic example is the icon of the *Holy Metropolitan Aleksiy and St Sergius of Radonezh* (1801), where the half-open curtain and the epigram included in the framing constitute an explication of what is taking place on the 'theatrical stage' (illus. 18, 19). They create the illusion of dramatic action:

> The prelate Aleksiy invests Sergiy with his rank,
> But the latter declines to accept it.
> The one does battle with the other,
> And both do a miraculous deed,
> But who then is victor?
> Both the righteous prelate
> And Sergiy triumph:
> To do the Lord's will they both agree.

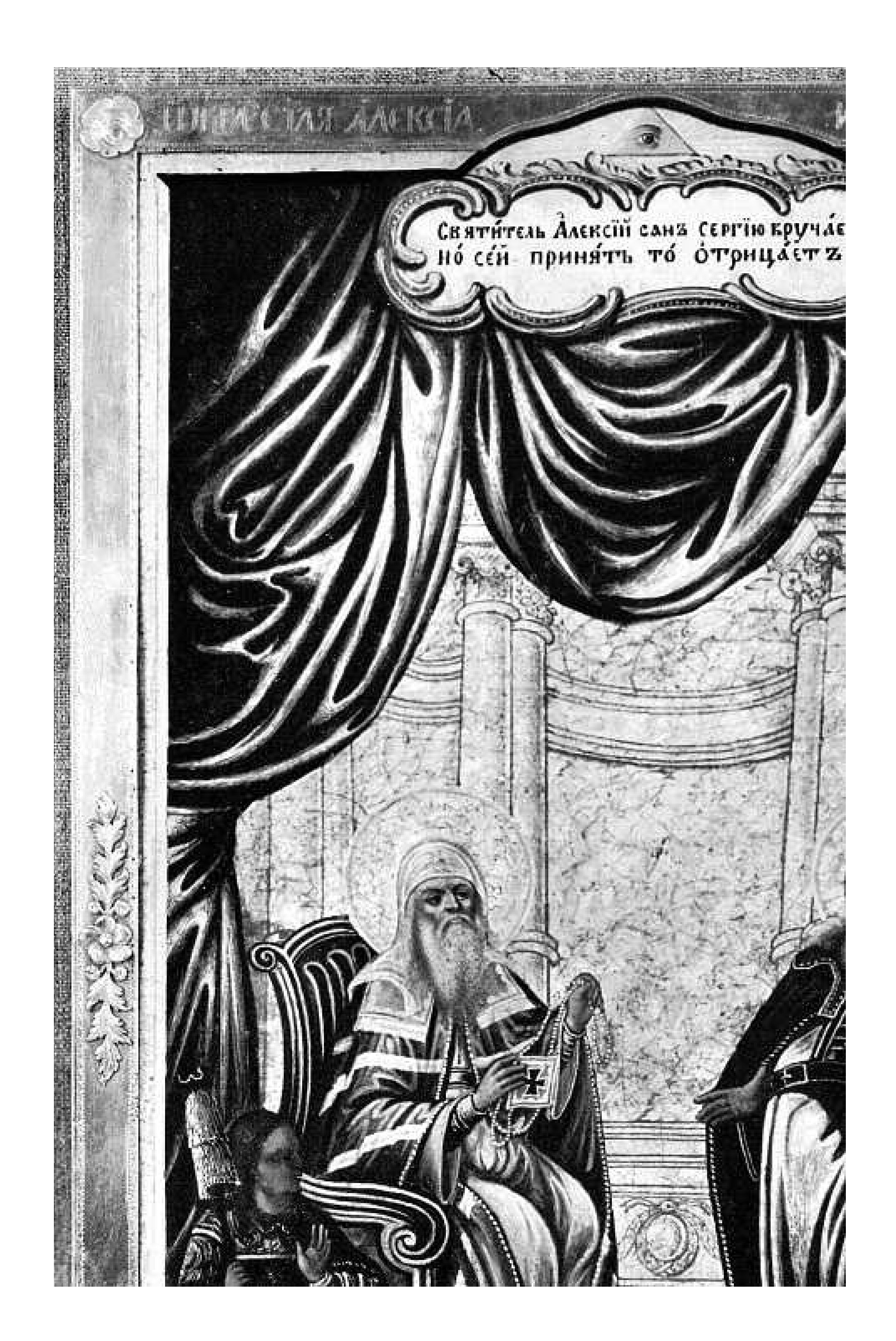
The painter's art transforms the new icon into an admonition, an entertaining illustration of models of holiness and virtue. The curtain in the depiction here points us towards the difficulty of



apprehending the divine truth. It is no accident that in the contemporary works of Grigoriy Skovoroda the sacred text of the Bible is often covered with a 'figurative curtain' specially put there for 'lowborn hearts and those inclined to curiosity'.[47] But as well as that the curtain acquires special trust: authentic existence is 'dimly' revealed through the veil of that beauty, which is apprehended by prayer and reflection. Hence the half-drawn curtain is always reliant on a particular direction of the percipient gaze; to be precise, on a reverent and lengthy process of decoding, thanks to which the poses and gestures of the saints are linked with the poetic text, with the interior or with the further landscape.

In other words, the curtain on a modern icon demands a special visual activity as a condition of

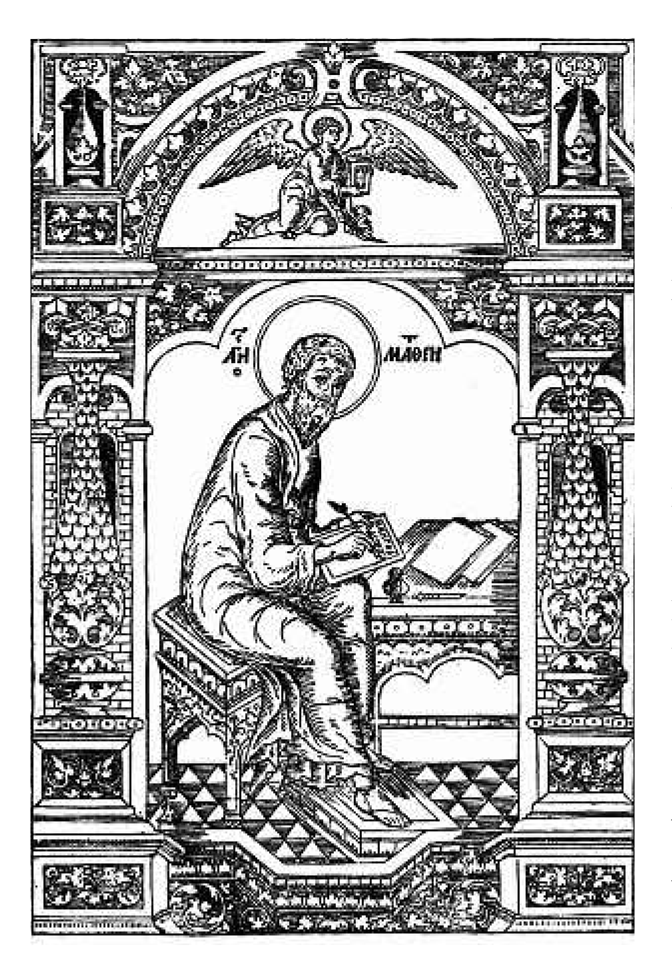
18 *Holy Metropolitan Aleksiy and St Sergius of Radonezh*, 1801. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



19 Detail of the drapery hangings.



20 *Nativity of Christ*, early 19th century, on a 17th-century model (detail). State Open-air Museum of Architectural History and Art 'Kolomenskoye', Moscow.



21 'The Evangelist Matthew', engraving from a gospel book (1627).

its new manner of apprehension: the spectator takes part in the 'process of artistic creation', in the wake of the painter producing a 'second nature', which is higher than the nature of surrounding reality. Thus according to the aesthetic theories of the second half of the eighteenth century the power of the fine arts consisted in the fact that these arts could arouse in a person 'an attachment to beauty and goodness . . . to make him love truth and virtue, turning him away from all evil'.[48] And the artist himself could be seen as a 'theologian, philosopher, subtle politician, skilled historian and assiduous connoisseur of antiquities'.[49]

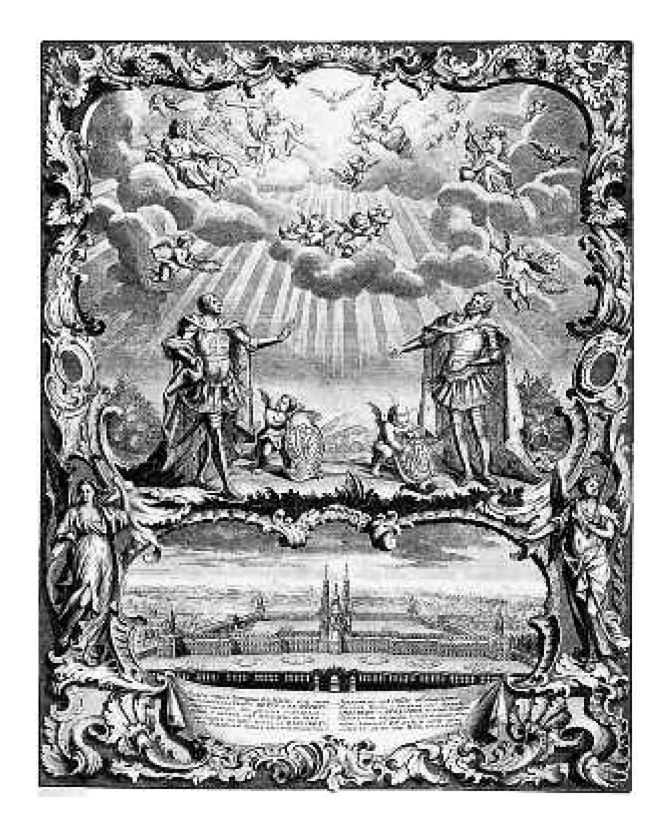
Meanwhile, one of the most important iconographic sources for the new icon was the Renaissance/Baroque engraving, which appeared in Muscovite Rus' in the second half of the seventeenth century through the intermediary of Polish, Belorussian and Ukrainian cultures and did not lose its significance through the whole eighteenth century.[50] It assisted Russian icon painters to assimilate the new aesthetic theory, on the one hand, in mediated form, on the other in the cultural context of the age. As a most powerful instrument of 'visual propaganda' in the age of the Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, it was the engraving that possessed the range of artistic devices that helped to overwhelm a person's consciousness. For that reason not only individual depictions, texts and framing constructions, but also whole compositions were borrowed in it. Thus the framing copied onto a seventeenth-century icon of the *Nativity of Christ* repeats the framing around an engraving of the evangelist Matthew from a gospel book of 1627 (illus. 20, 21). Here only the framing construction of the Renaissance tabernacle (see above) is transferred onto the icon. But by the eighteenth century the artist and engraver could also give the icon painter a fundamentally new model for the prayer image. In part, it was fulfilled at the behest of Church hierarchs and monasteries. Icons of *St Alexander Nevsky* and the *Great Martyr Theodore* (illus. 22), for example, copied the printed colophon to the Alexander Nevsky Monastery made by the engraver Grigoriy Kachalov from drawings by Elias Grimmel and Mikhail Makhayev at the command of Archbishop Theodore of St Petersburg in April 1747 (illus. 23, 24).[51] The popularity of such icons and printed sheets is explained by Dmitriy Rovinsky: Kachalov's engraving 'is academic, but

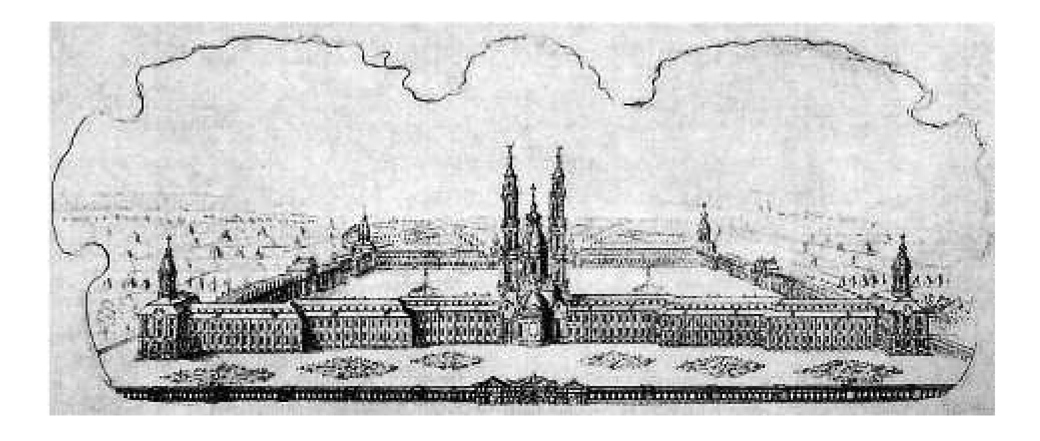


22 Ivan Grekov, *St Alexander Nevsky and the Great Martyr Theodore, with a View of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery*, mid-18th century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

was sold in great quantities at the monastery shop, which is why it is numbered among popular works'.[52]

In the mid-eighteenth century the word 'summary' (*tezis*) came to be used instead of the word 'colophon' (*konklyuziya*). Both meant a scholastic panegyric that united a depiction with an extensive text and was distinguished by a complex allegorical composition that linked the heavenly realm and the earthly world. Thus in the 'earthly world' the printed sheet by Kachalov linked the encomium to the monastery with its real buildings, while in the 'heavenly realm' there were representations of the saints with angels and the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Meanwhile, the spectator would see not stern, holy figures apparently dwelling in the 'ark' of a medieval icon, but a theatricalized scene, whose reality was vouched for by two archangels, 'emerging' out of the system of the depiction and located on the frame, like the personages in many Renaissance and Baroque pictures and prints. The holy men were carrying on a conversation, as their poses and gestures indicated, while the angels acted as intermediaries between heaven and earth, bearing wreaths and crowns. One might consider that all of them had entered into a dialogue with that laudatory encomium that related both to themselves and to the monastery, and to those royal personages who had assisted its foundation. Everything was filled with hints and meanings, saturated with illusionism and wrapped in a special picturesque poetry, clearly flowing from a new type of metaphorical thought and aesthetics. By





23 Mikhail Makhayev, *Alexander Nevsky Monastery*, 1747, drawing. Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg.

24 Colophon in praise of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, engraving after a drawing by Elias Grimmel and Mikhail Makhayev, 1748.



subjecting this icon to Baroque poetics, its authors multiplied its levels of meaning, making it not only excite the imagination, but also touch and delight people as useful, attractive and accessible. They also brought it close to the panegyric and the sermon, setting up new relations between word and image.

Under the influence of etchings, and seeking to demonstrate the equal validity (in response to Protestant doctrines) of sacred text and illustration, post-medieval Russian icons of the eighteenth century are heavily laden with extensive texts: akathists, quotations from the Lives of the saints, testimonies to the miracles wrought by icons, and

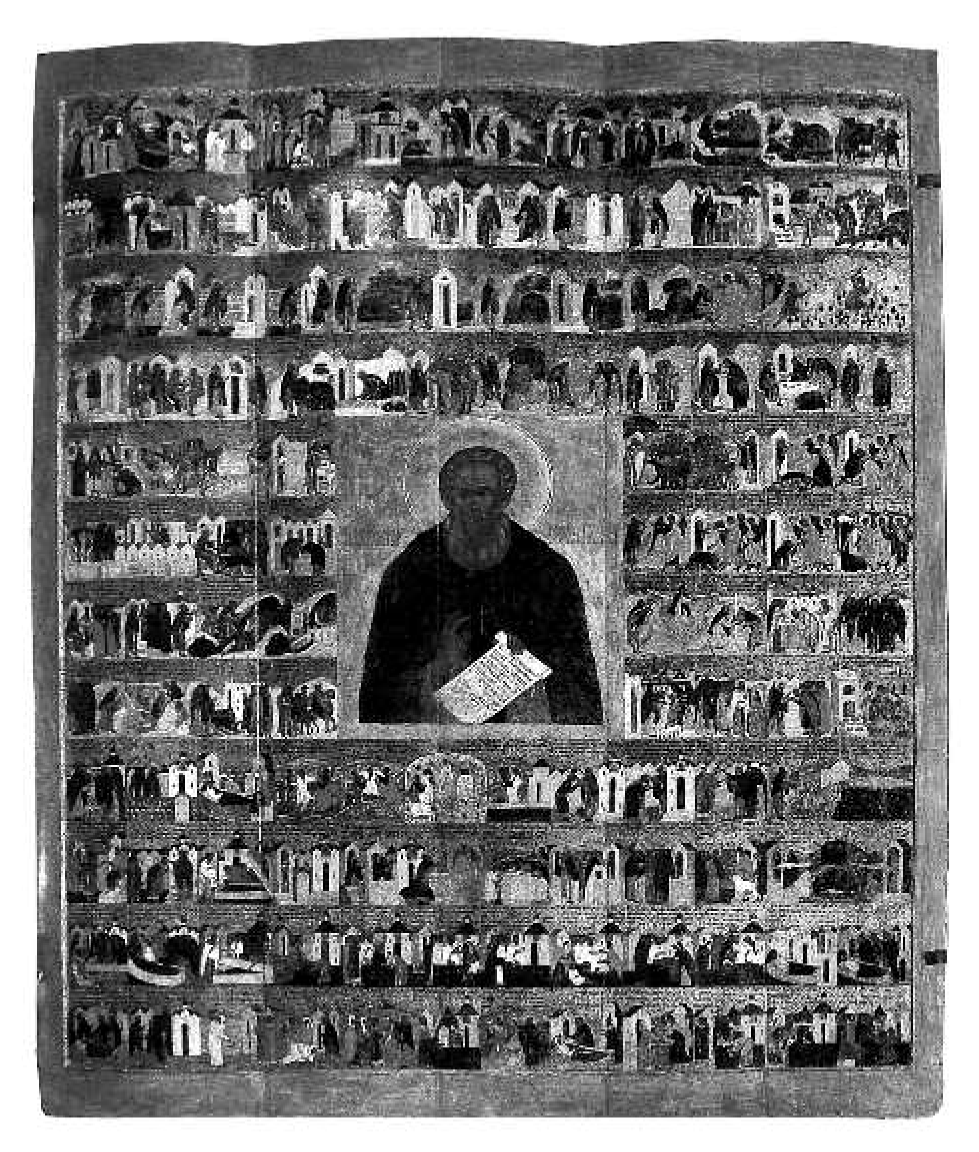
25 *SS Zosima and Savva of Solovki, with a View of the Solovki Monastery*, early 18th century. Museum of Pictorial Arts, Archangel.



also verses written in the genre of the 'iconological epigram'. Even making a signature beneath an icon became a special theme of Russian syllabic verse in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This was a concern, for example, of Karion Istomin and Yevfimiy Chudovsky.[53] The framed compositions of these later icons, and engravings of *SS Zosima and Savva of Solovki with a View of the Solovki Monastery*, may be compared with Protestant altars that bear biblical texts on the predella. In Russia these were replaced by texts from the Lives of the saints, an anthem or akathist (illus. 25, 26). The same applies to Russian engravings that show a 'portrait' of the saint and a text representing his teaching, clearly made under the influence of Catholic and Protestant prints with a two-part composition in which the text commented on the illustration and vice versa.[54] Finally, representations of Russian saints could acquire a fundamentally new treatment. The frame of an engraving by Martin Nekhoroshevsky of the *Holy Martyr Dimitriy* (1735) carries a text of the Life of the saint, so creating a sort of 'verbal icon' that is on an equal footing with the illustration. Set within the frame resembling a Western European altar, a commentary is provided not only through the text of the troparion and kontakion but also by information taken from the history of the murdered tsarevich. Engravings also served as models for later icons.[55]

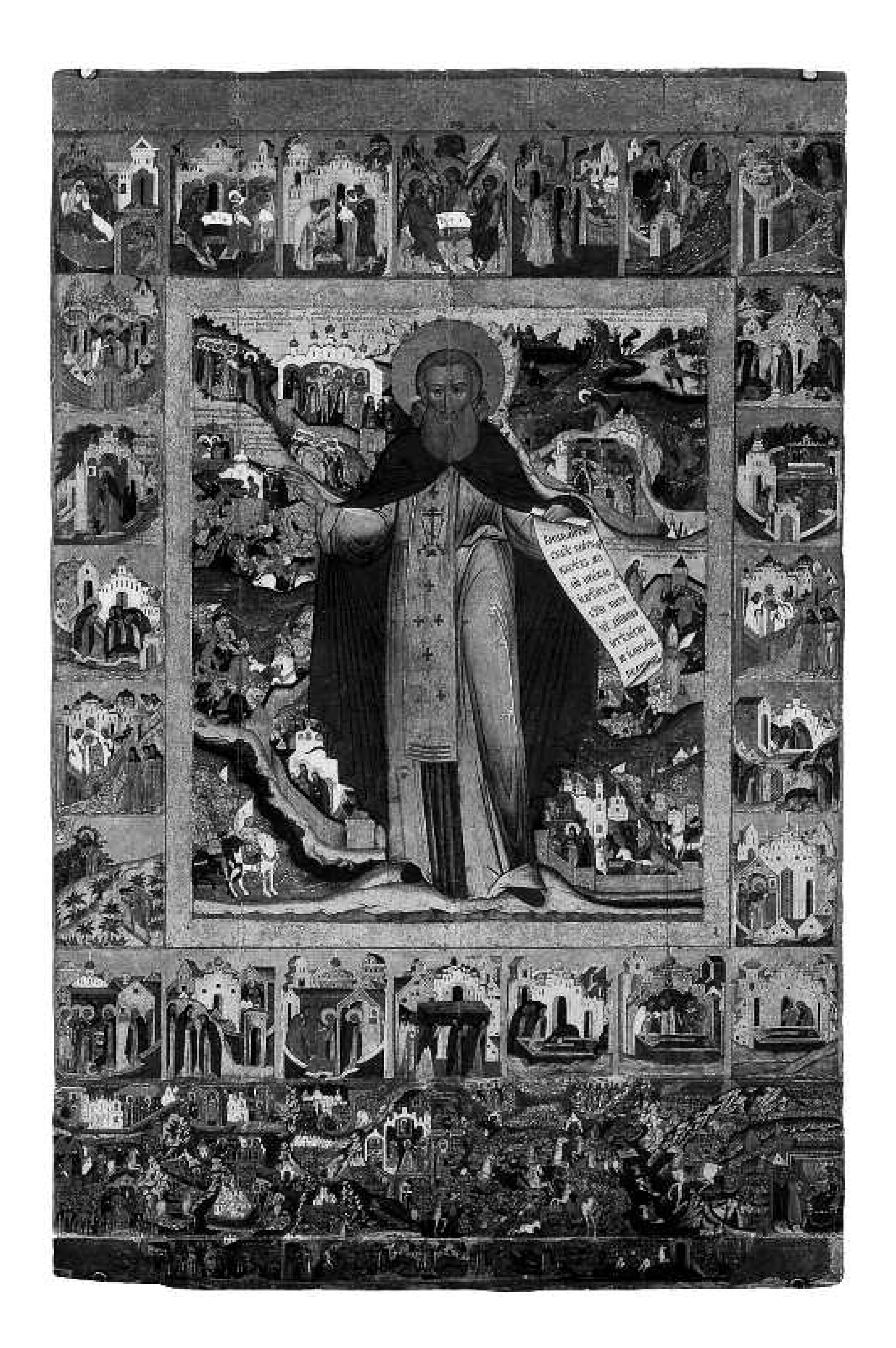
New ways of perceiving the world also began to be reflected in the frame of the icon representing a saint's life. This becomes evident if we compare, for example, an icon of this kind of *St Alexander Svirsky* (mid-sixteenth century, from the Dormition Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin) with an icon of *St Sergius of Radonezh* from the second half of the seventeenth century (illus. 27, 28). Florensky seems to have been the first to pose the question of how to apprehend icons showing 'Lives', and the function of their frame in the organization of time and space. The middle part of an icon of a Life is 'the spiritual aspect of the given person', its 'idea in the Platonic sense, or entelechy', 'the centre of all relationships'. The frame with its individual scenes from the Life may be regarded, so the scholar thought, as 'revealing and elucidating this central element'. Its historical time is characterized by movement, that is, by change and development in the holy personage shown at

26 *SS Zosima and Savva of Solovki, with a View of the Solovki Monastery*, early 18th century engraving, from Dmitriy Rovinsky, *Russian Popular Pictures: Atlas*, vol. IV (1893), no. 6.



the centre. After 'sliding' ceaselessly around the individual scenes of the Life on the frame, the viewer's gaze would return to the central element and the repose to be beheld in it. But the same effect could be produced if the gaze went in the opposite direction, whereby the viewer would apprehend the 'fullness' and 'absolute quality' of the central element in the construction of the artistic frame, over which his gaze would no longer 'slide', but move towards the centre, relating each small quadrilateral with the scene of the Life portrayed in the middle. Each temporal slice of the frame round the Life was apprehended through the single centre, which caused the central element and the frame to be indissolubly linked and dependent on one another.[56] In other words, the frame depicting the Life made no commentary on the central element and did not direct the viewer's

27 *St Alexander Svirsky, with Life*, mid-16th century. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.



28 *St Sergius of Radonezh, with Life*, *c.* 1680. Yaroslavl Open-air Museum of Architectural History.



imagination towards its understanding, but made the viewer apprehend it as a metaphysical entity, since it was inseparable from the image in the central rectangle. Such a frame served the purposes of 'mnemotechnics' (skilled memory). Each of its compartments is reminiscent of a 'locus' – a distinct place for each separate image, since according to medieval ideas the skilled memory consisted of places and images. As one scholar notes,

> The formation of places has great significance, since one and the same disposition of 'loci' [places] can be used many times over in committing varied material to memory. The images that we have disposed in them for memorizing a particular series of things fade and are obliterated if we do not use them any more. But places stay in the mind and can be used again to install a different set of images, relating to different material.[57]

Drawn into the reading of images on frames that define 'loci', the gaze is summoned only to recognize and memorize things according to a priori rules that were not subject to alteration. That is why a frame displaying a Life on a medieval icon

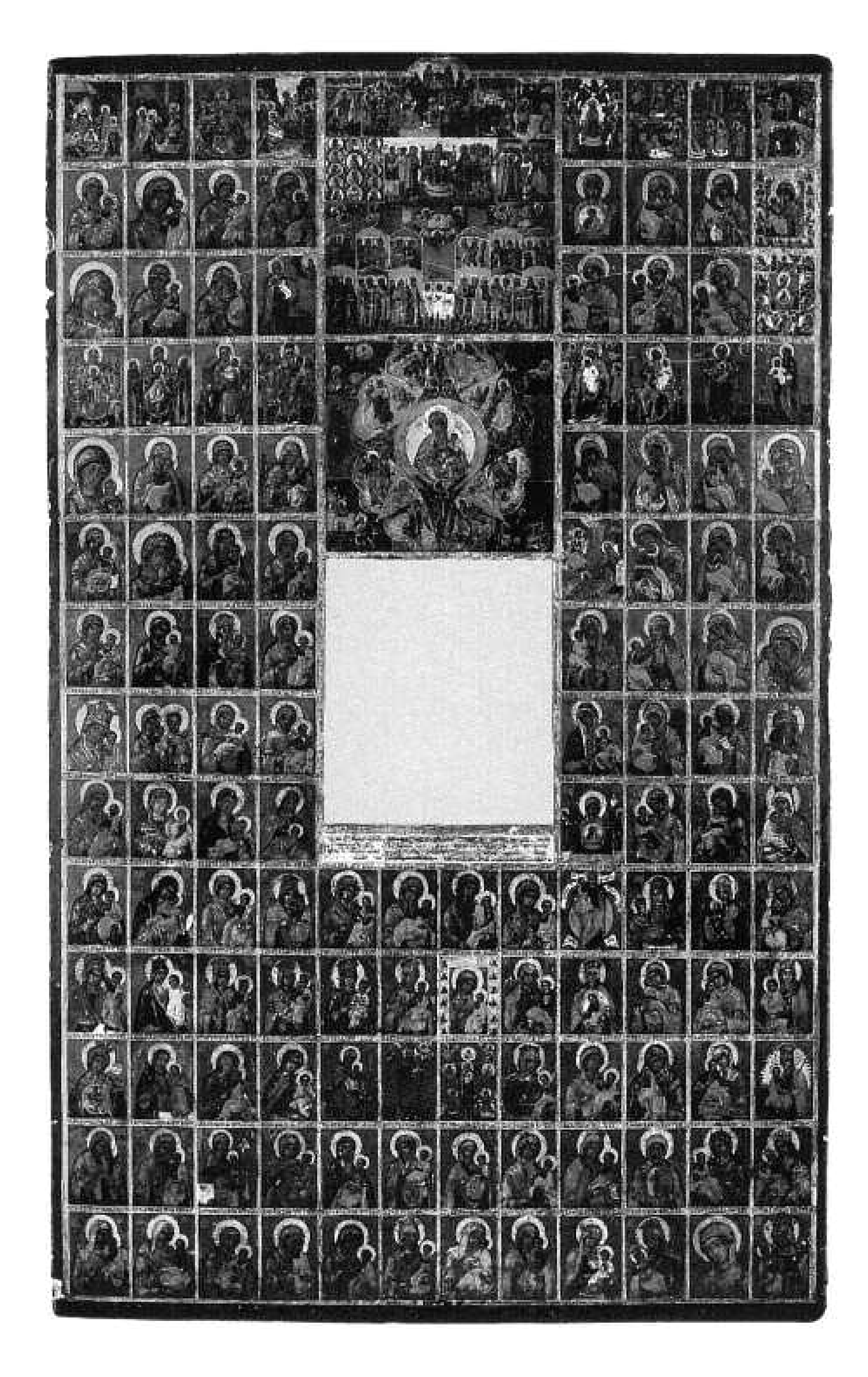
29 Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423, altarpiece for S. Trinità, Florence. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

could be quantitatively overloaded with individual scenes (there are 128 on the icon of *St Alexander Svirsky*) and not change its form.

This icon of *St Sergius of Radonezh* is unusual in that the painter located the scenes of his Life not only on the traditional frame around the 'portrait' of the saint, but also within the central element. With the help of Western European pictures and engravings a new system of representation, in which elements of linear and reverse perspective found it possible to coexist, was coming into being. For the time being this coexistence was supported by the traditional frame with a Life, but the frame itself acquired additional compositional 'little frames', so defining the background and organization of the main level on which the figure of Sergius of Radonezh was depicted.[58] His 'portrait' thereby acquired a fundamentally new 'commentary' as compared with the 'portrait' of *Alexander Svirsky* on the Moscow Kremlin icon. It was made while the path of art was deviating from the former rules into the context of the new aesthetic theory of the period. And it was this theory that permitted the Russian icon painter of the second half of the seventeenth century to locate scenes of the saint's Life not only outside the central element, as previously, but also within it in imitation of Western European pictures, which had to have the frame separate. The image started to lean towards illusionism and multi-layered content. In this respect the icon of *Sergius of Radonezh* with his Life is distantly reminiscent of Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece (1423; Uffizi, Florence), made for Santa Trinità in Florence, which many specialists, as was mentioned in the Introduction, view as the very beginning of the appearance of the separate picture frame in the West (illus. 29).[59] It also accommodates various planes of representation and discloses elements of linear perspective, saturated with new visual rhetoric. Rounded windows within Gothic pointed arches showing Christ and the Virgin and scenes on the predella of the altar casing still speak of a link with medieval forms. But all the same they are on the point of losing the earlier symbolism, and it will not be long before their complete disappearance will present the frame itself with an opportunity to choose between the ecclesiastical and secular



30 *St Barbara*, *c.* 1750–1800. State Historical Museum, Moscow.



31 Ivan Dorofeyev, frame for the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God*, with a compendium of Mother of God icons, 1722. Private collection.



image. Something similar happened with Russian art too in the second half of the seventeenth century.

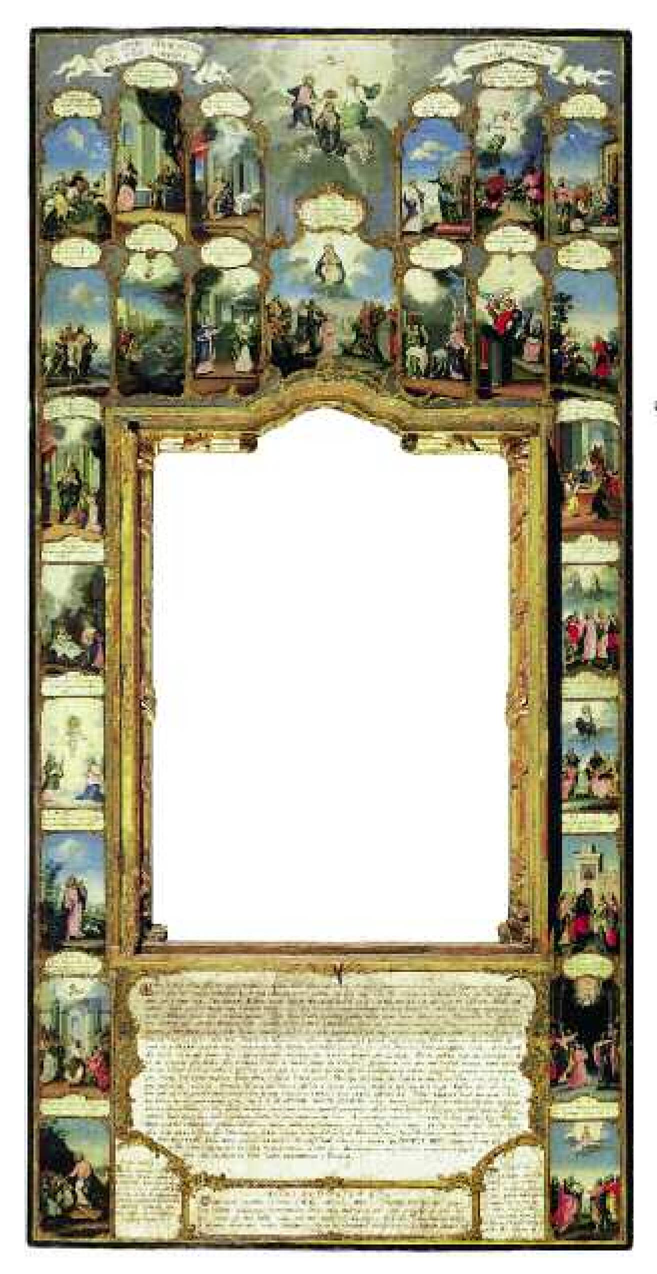
In the following century linear perspective and the picture frame finally established their positions in Russian church art. In the icon with Life of *St Barbara* (second half of the eighteenth century; Historical Museum, Moscow, illus. 30) the medieval 'ark' has disappeared, while the margins of the icon have transformed themselves into a delicate picturesque frame – linear perspective and the new rhetoric of the image have made the master re-examine his concept of the frame of representation. It is no accident that this icon is nowadays displayed in a delicate frame, one in which you might expect a picture. All the same, there is a corresponding symbolism in the representational system of this frame, which the craftsman borrowed from collections of engraved emblems and whose aim is to conquer a person's heart and imagination. The holy martyr crushes underfoot the sword with which the executioner beheads her in the background of the picture. This one scene from the Life reveals the main idea of the image: the Gospels and faith in the Holy Trinity give victory over death. In this instance the sword serves as a sort of 'pedestal' for the figure, its 'symbolic framing', just as does the picturesque

32 Engraving with a compendium of Mother of God icons, after Grigory Tepchegorsky, 18th century, a detail from Dmitry Rovinsky, *Russian Popular Pictures: Atlas*, vol. III (1881), no. 1216.

background with its scene of execution and a church building.

The new rhetoric and aesthetic were also capable of featuring in the iconography of individual pictorial frames, on which traditionally not only scenes from Lives of the saints had been located, but also illustrated accounts of famous miracle-working images – the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, and the Vladimir, Tikhvin, Smolensk and Kazan versions of the *Mother of God*. Often polemics with Protestants and a defence of the main Orthodox ideas would be carried on in the conceptual space of the frame. The Protestant rejection of the cult of the Mother of God and the saints led to the widespread diffusion of these frames. Such, for example, is the frame for an icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God* with a comprehensive array of Mother of God icons, made by the icon painter Ivan Dorofeyev in 1722 and commissioned by the abbot of the Chudov Monastery in the Kremlin, Nikon Dranitsyn (illus. 31). The frame was a 'contribution' by the patron to the Moscow church of SS Peter and Paul as an 'eternal remembrance', and most likely was modelled on engravings by Grigory Tepchegorsky, showing miracle-working icons of the Mother of God, that were reissued several times in the course of the eighteenth century (illus. 32). It embodied the concept of the icon as a free work of art, since it included images bearing the new iconography that had been created by Tepchegorsky in 1713–14 from various sources, including literary ones. The engraver and his icon-painting follower emerged as creators of novel prayer images thanks to that 'subtle design' that Baroque poetics and rhetoric had dictated to him.

The same concept of the new icon emerged from the manuscript collection called 'Most Radiant Sun', put together between 1713 and 1716 by Simeon Mokhovitov, the guardian of the Kremlin Annunciation Cathedral, for which, as scholars surmise, Tepchegorsky's engravings too were prepared.[60] The task of artist and writer was to create a full compendium of the miracle-working icons of the Mother of God that were revered not only in Russia, but also in other Christian lands. With this in mind they made use of literary works on similar themes: *The New Heavens* by Ioannikiy Galyatovsky, *The Garden of Mary Mother of God* by Antoniy Radivilovsky, tales of miracles performed by the icons and also other models and sources. On every page of the book there was an engraving by Tepchegorsky showing an icon of the Mother of God, and beside it a text by Mokhovikov giving brief accounts of the date and circumstances of the appearance of the icon and of the miracles that flowed from it. The various images, for example of the Yevtropiy, Yaksinsky, Galansky, Tumbovsky and other icons of the Mother of God, were created by Tepchegorsky solely according to literary descriptions from *The New Heavens*.[61] Embracing the sphere of the imagination, these images clearly came close to poetry, since they obliterated the boundary between similarity to the old image and the concept of this image, about which Bal'tazar Grasian wrote: 'Comparison is the source of a great multitude of subtle thoughts. It is the third impulse for wit, providing limitless opportunities; from it can issue elegant parallels and contrasts, metaphors, allegories, metamorphoses, nomenclatures and similar inexhaustible varieties of subtle thoughts.'[62] That is to say, the medieval category of similitude had given way to the Renaissance and Baroque concept of metaphor. Baroque 'wit' (*acutezza*) was understood not only as sharp-





witted speech, but also as the free play of thoughts and images. Thus there is nothing surprising in the fact that scholars have found a multitude of invented dates and historical facts in Mokhovikov's texts, and equally as many drawings of the Mother of God invented by Tepchegorsky. In other words, the frame with its collection of icons of the Mother of God by the painter Ivan Dorofeyev revealed a host of cultural historical meanings. It contained not only a complex symbolic programme linked with the ecclesiastical scholastic Baroque, but also reflected the religious and political realities of the time – the defence of icon veneration and the Orthodox Church's concern to strengthen the cult

33 Aleksey Kholmogorets, Frame with akathist to the Mother of God, 1746. Velikiy Ustyug Open-air Museum of Architectural History and Art.

34 Northern European pictorial frame, *c.* 1450–60. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

of wonder-working images. For this reason both Mokhovikov's compendium and Tepchegorsky's engravings were created in precisely the years when the iconoclastic heresy of Dmitriy Tveritinov appeared in Moscow.[63] The rhetorical structure developed in Mokhovnikov's compendium was essentially carried over into Ivan Dorofeyev's icon, although in a more laconic form: the icon painter had the opportunity to reveal the major holy object of Muscovite Russia – the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God* – in the framing of a new type of image, endowing it with a new type of aura that heightened its cult significance and role.[64]

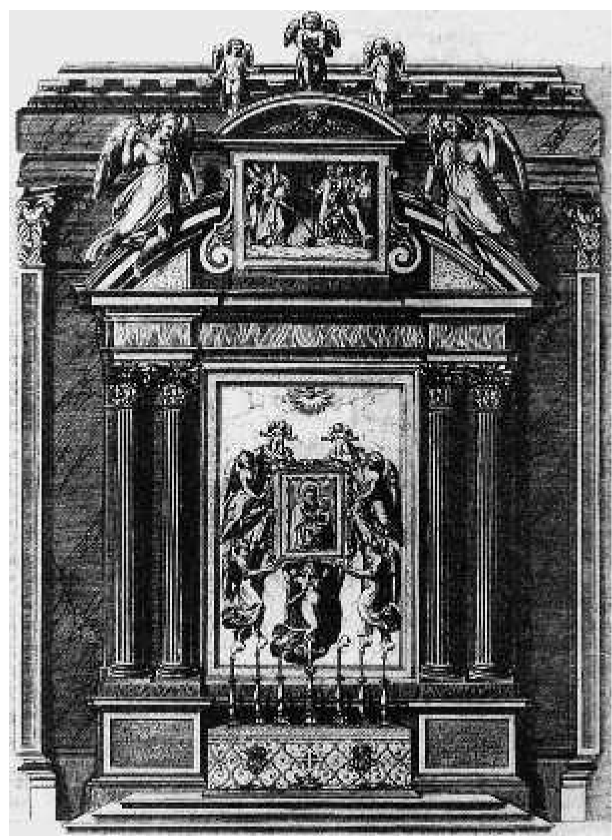
Of course, picturesque icon frames are encountered as far back as Byzantine art between the eleventh century and the early fifteenth.[65] However, the Baroque age clearly chose to privilege this structure, in the context of full attention to the frame as an instrument with which to heighten the didactic impulse of the religious image. Hence, if earlier the painterly frame played the part of reliquary and ark, now it was striving to project a doctrinaire role, as is witnessed not only by Ivan Dorofeyev's frame, but also by a multitude of other frames with scenes of akathists and tales about famous wonder-working images – the *Saviour Not Made by Hands* and the Vladimir, Kazan, Tikhvin and Smolensk icons of the Mother of God. And we should note that all of them begin to be disseminated from the early sixteenth century, that is, from the time that the Orthodox Church was obliged vigorously to resist the pressure of the Reformation, which denied the veneration of icons and the cult of the Mother of God and the saints. It was not only on the pages of theo - logical tracts, but also in the iconography of icon framing that the polemics with Protestants and the defence of the major ideas of Orthodoxy were pursued.



Thus the frame with the akathist to the Mother of God, painted in 1746 by the craftsman Aleksey Kholmogorets, is in form reminiscent of Renaissance and Baroque framings of altar images (illus. 33, 34). Its iconography, decorations and construction are typical of the time and once again confirm the conception of the frame in the Baroque age as an independent work of art. Representing the ark of an ancient shrine, the frame does not so much conceal it from the eyes of the multitude as attempt to tell the people about it, to bring it close to the world and to the individual. And here the rhetoric of Kholmogorets clearly vied with that of

35 *Coronation of the Mother of God*, 1794. State Open-air Museum of Architectural History and Art 'Kolomenskoye', Moscow.





religious poetry, persuading the spectator that the ancient image of the Hodegitria had particular significance in the work of salvation.

Ultimately, Baroque aesthetics and rhetoric led to the appearance of icons with complex frames of multiple components, or rather with separate marginal frames, which replaced the medieval 'ark' with margins that were integral with the board or boards. The framing of the icon of the *Coronation of the Mother of God* (1794), created under the influence of Catholic engravings of particularly revered miraculous images, carries interesting meanings (illus. 35, 36, 37). In the middle of the icon is a depiction of the Mother of God, enclosed in a Baroque frame resembling a Catholic altar. On either side of the frame are placed the four Evangelists and two female martyrs, while above is a scene of the Mother of God with the Child and angels. Higher up on the icon space are depicted John the Baptist, a chariot with Christ seated within it, and affixed to it the symbols of the four Evangelists – a lion, a calf, an angel and an eagle. The figure of John the Baptist, towards which the chariot is moving, is surrounded by a Star of David, from which come forth rays in the form of words: 'forerunner', 'to the sun', 'to all', 'morning star', 'to people', 'crying out'. On nearby scrolls we can read: 'this comes after me', 'raise up thy voice as a fortress', 'I beheld the likeness of four beasts with the likeness of faces: a human

36 Frame of the icon.

37 Altar with a miracle-working icon of the Virgin Mary, 1621; engraving in the Paolino Chapel, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome.

face, a lion's face, a calf's face, an eagle's face', 'divine love poured forth', 'seeking into hearts'. This whole complex composition with verses was painted on a board that was set into a separate board with silver adornment.

Created in the context of Baroque poetics, this icon represented a many-layered symbolic image, whose meaning could be revealed only in the process of contemplative visual activity. 'So as to display sharpness of wit', as Emanuele Tesauro explained of similar examples, 'one must refer to concepts not straightforwardly, but figuratively, employing the power of invention, that is to say new and unexpected methods'.[66]

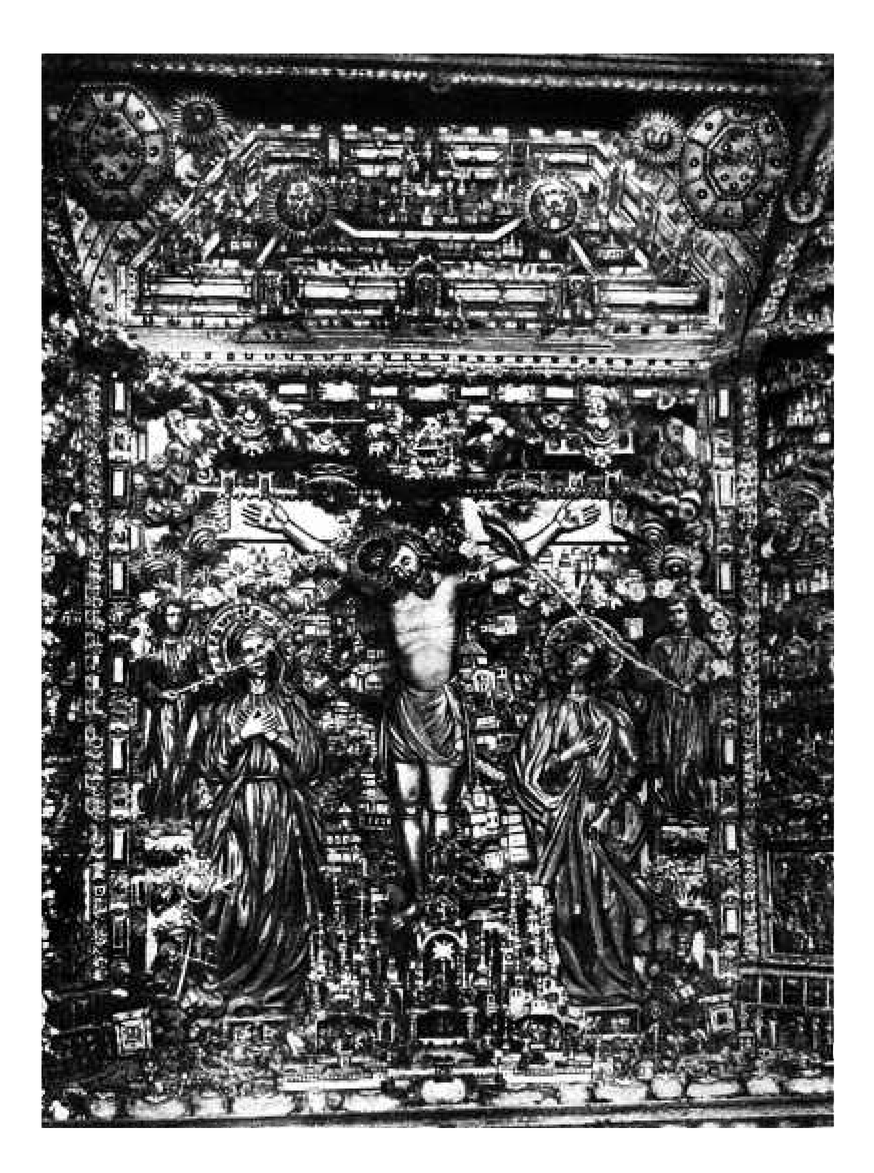
In other words, all the icons examined earlier in this chapter can be considered worthy works of art only in so far as they displayed subtlety of wit, through which the image could attain multiple layers of meaning. That is why the margins of the icon could unexpectedly be separated from the portrayal, while the picture itself could be surrounded by additional lesser textual and pictorial frames that had come from other forms of art: engravings, easel paintings, the theatre or architecture. As we know, Tesauro, like other Baroque theoreticians, extended his theory of metaphor to all forms of artistic creativity. In the Baroque period the whole world seemed a metaphor that ceaselessly opened up other facets of existence. In consequence of this formula there took place a gradual ascent from ornamental decoration and details to emblems, and from them to allegories and thence to symbols.

Hence the frame of the work of art could fully be regarded as the first step (or threshold) towards a comprehension of the authentic world, of the penetration into the mysteries of ceaseless metamorphoses and of the interpenetration of the heavenly and earthly cosmos. Between the depiction and the frame a new system of symbolic connections, belonging to the sphere of the imagination, had been set up. The frame took upon itself the image's excess of meaningfulness, and turned from a means of preserving the divine countenance into an instrument for its comprehension. That was the essence of the separation of the image from the frame, which in Western Europe took place at the time of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, but in Russia about two centuries later. This is attested by the so-called iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev, one of the most grandiose frames of the Russian Baroque period, in which Western Latin rhetoric and the new aesthetics reached perhaps the limits of their joint powers. It is a unique monument of Orthodox visual scholasticism, in which powerful images of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance encountered each other and were inseparably intertwined.

Frame as World

On 21 October 1754 the Moscow office of the governmental Senate was faced with an unusual item of business. It was occasioned by a report from the procurator general, Ivan Ivanovich Bekhmetev, concerning an iconostasis that was astonishing for its times: a vast frame within which was set an icon of Christ's Crucifixion (illus. 38). The document read as follows:

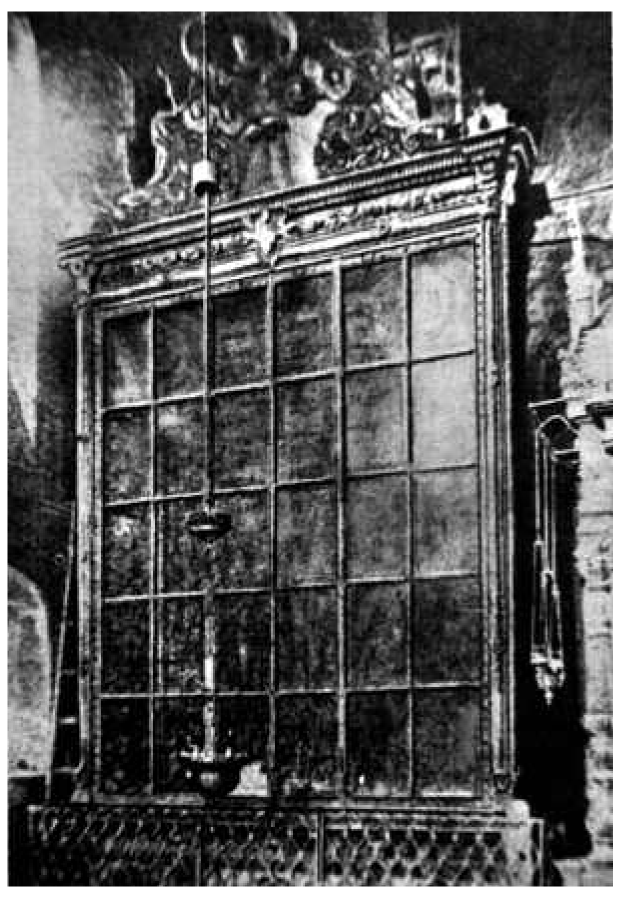
> In Moscow the merchant Shumayev has for a long time caused to be constructed the Life-Giving Cross with very remarkable ornamentation, which has almost come to completion.



And now it is known that the merchant Shumayev, because of his great age, is already becoming forgetful, and there is a danger that at the death of this Shumayev the said cross could be lost, and therefore would it not be expeditious to take the aforementioned cross under the special purview of the Senate office?[67]

A specially created commission resolved to assist the 90-year-old master craftsman in completing the iconostasis and to transfer it to the Sretensky Monastery in Moscow. On 22 January 1755 the order came 'to dismantle that cross and to set it up in the appointed place'. As a result a thick file of documents has survived from 1754 to 1761 that puts unique materials in the hands of the researcher. These deal with the dismantling of

38 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: *Crucifixion, with the Mother of God and St John the Divine*, *c.* 1675–1750.



the iconostasis into its component parts, making drawings of it and transferring it to the Sretensky Monastery, orders to seek tenders for completing and setting up the iconostasis; and finally a detailed description compiled in 1762, after its transfer to the monastery, on the basis of information provided by Grigoriy Shumayev himself.[68] According to the documents, the master himself called his work 'an iconostasis of the Life-giving Cross', while the title 'Cross with iconostasis' is also found in his handwriting. In the official documents it was emphasized that Grigoriy Shumayev called his 'cross' an iconostasis that 'consists of small carved components in great number'. In the same documents we encounter the names 'cross' – 'cross in a casing with ornamentations' and 'cross with all its appropriate ornamentations'. All these testify to the fact that both the master and his contemporaries regarded the iconostasis as a casing frame that in their minds was not something separate from the icon of the *Crucifixion* itself. It is known that in the eighteenth century the word iconostasis referred both to an altar screen and to the casing in which an icon would be placed. In 1755 the iconostasis was set up in the main cathedral of the Sretensky Monastery, 'within the cathedral church behind the altar on the left by the church wall', and attracted immediate attention: 'and now into that Sretensky monastery for prayer, and even more to gaze at that Cross during divine service, there come a multitude of people and are squeezed together looking at it'.[69] As a result a safety barrier was placed in front of the iconostasis. It acted like a magnet, drawing the people's gaze towards the striking spectacle: before the viewer there opened up an astonishing panorama of the imagination – the entire Christian cosmos in all its variety and detail.

The chief artistic peculiarity of the iconostasis was the inventive manner in which all the seventeenth-century aesthetic concepts were brought together on Russian soil. Responding to the basic Baroque theory of 'symbolic metaphor' and 'speedy power of thought', Shumayev's craftsmen devised the iconostasis as a grandiose *frame* for the redemptive sacrifice of the Saviour. The path of the 'intelligent' gaze of the spectator led from the decorations surrounding the composition to the emblems, from the emblems to the allegories and from the allegories to the central symbol,

39 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev, glazed case, mid-18th century.

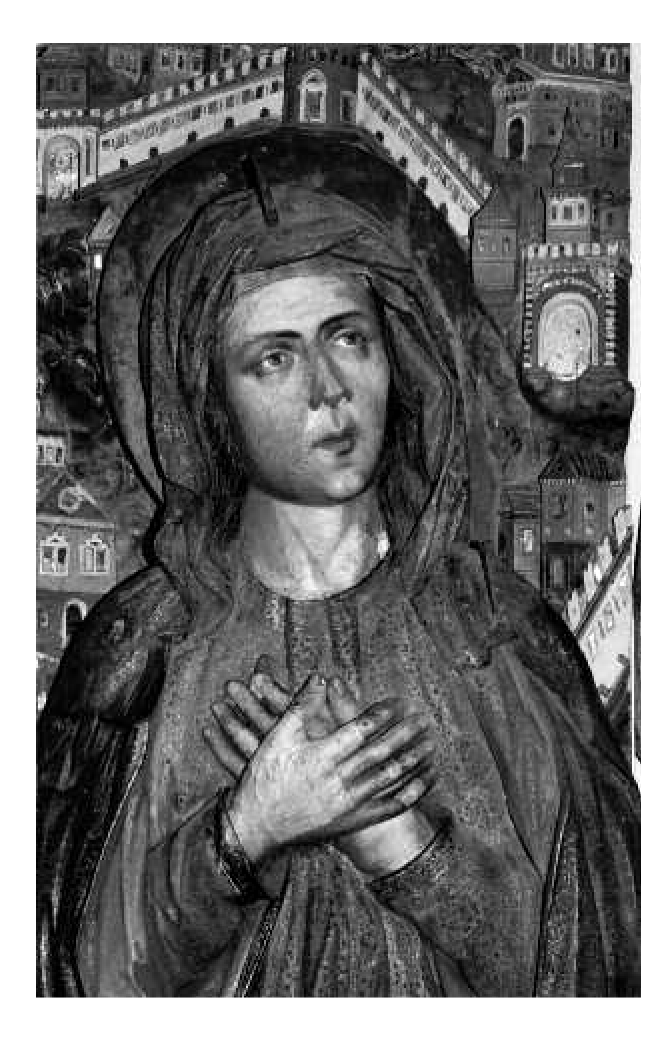
Christ's Crucifixion. And in so far as the world itself was understood as metaphor during the Baroque period, so too the Christian cosmos was likened to God's 'footstool' (Matthew 5:34–5), that is, to his symbolic 'framing'. Following the Baroque aesthetic, all the 'curious decoration' that had so struck the senator Ivan Ivanovich Bekhmetev was nothing other than the ornament of the frame, 'swollen' to a remarkable extent; at its basis there were the same rules of Baroque rhetoric discussed above. The frame and its decoration (ornament) were elevated by the originator of the iconostasis into a complex metaphor, signifying a window, a door and a ladder into the heavenly kingdom. But in so far as the idea of the salvational sacrifice of Christ lay at the basis of this metaphor, the frame was not to be separated from the central representation of the Crucifixion. The frame and the central image constituted a single artistic space that embodied a model of the Christian picture of the world. Its axis of comprehension was a vertical at whose centre was the figure of Jesus, with the Mother of God and St John the Divine in attendance, against a background of the city of Jerusalem. This unusual icon of the *Crucifixion* was contained within two large framing constructions that dictated various levels of conventionality to the viewer's gaze. Thus the craftsman placed the *Crucifixion* itself with the Mother of God and St John in an enormous casing with a multitude of sculptural representations. In its turn this case was situated in an equally large housing (more than 7 m high and 4 m broad, illus. 39), adorned with iconic representations on its two sides, while in front it was closed by glazed shutters with transoms. In this way a complex rhetorical construction confronted the viewer: opened up, the iconostasis recalled a window in a wall; closed, it was a Renaissance tabernacle for a picture, a relief composition or a sculpture.

These two 'windows' were called upon to symbolize the ability of two worlds – the visible and the invisible – to communicate with each other. The first was the real world in which the viewer was located; the second, the theoretical world that embodied the model of the Christian cosmos. Each of the windows, moreover, was characterized by a particular play with space, in so far as the viewer's gaze had to move from less to more conventionalized space. Thus the inner frame was square in shape with a canopy-like structure above it that took the place of a classical pediment or cornice, as in many Russian encased icons of the later seventeenth century and the eighteenth (illus. 38). The side wings of the case were covered with scenes of the *Apocalypse* using subjects from the Old Testament and the gospels, while the lower part of the casing carried scenes depicting hell. The boundary between the visible and invisible worlds was erased by the fact that the scenes of hell placed underneath spread outside the frame, as it were disrupting it and rendering it unnecessary.

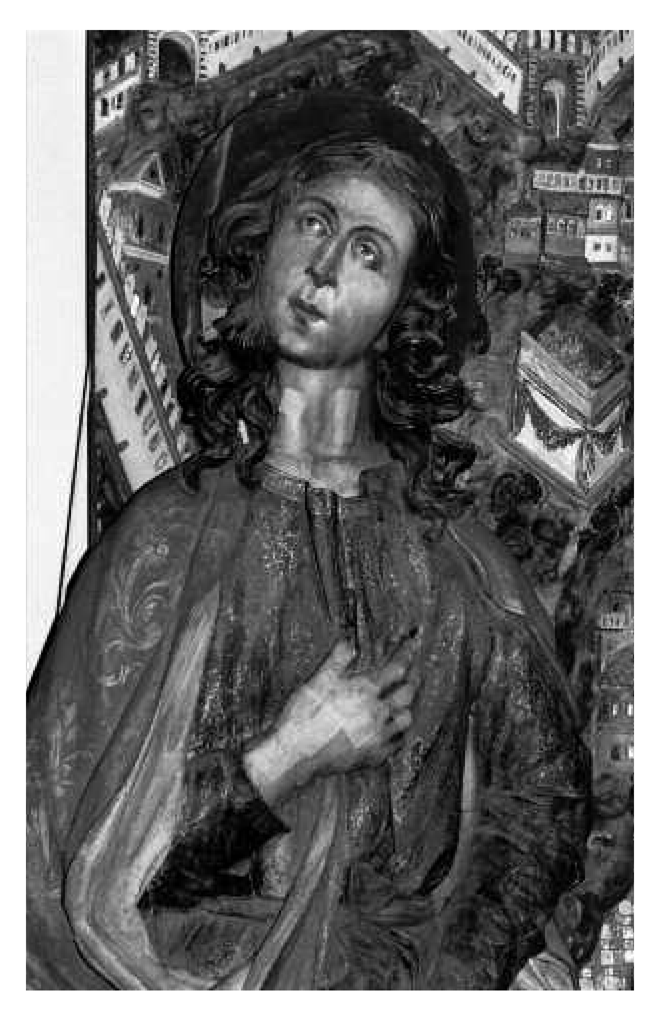
In the construction of its external housing this striving of the frame towards invisibility was realized in a different way: it created the illusion of looking through a window, which was achieved by making the doors semi-transparent through fretted shuttering. Moreover, these doors opened only halfway, displaying the central scene of the *Crucifixion*, while the other scenes remained covered with glass in gilded frames. Hence a view of the whole composition depended on perceiving the saint's life icon, since the 'window-like shutters'

gave the impression of a transparent casing, through which the viewer beheld the sculptural adornments. This was also emphasized by the artist's intention to 'adorn the closing frames with ready-prepared stones', that is, to decorate them like the casing of an icon, as mentioned in a note written before the iconostasis was finished. In this process the dependence on the symbolism of the window and the saint's life icon was strengthened by the way in which the sidepieces of the casing were arranged. If the view from in front (through glass) embraced sculpture, then that from the side took in lively pictures, since icons with representations of Christian feasts and New Testament parables, rather than pieces of glass, were set into it.

The coordination of the two great frames of the Shumayev iconostasis is merely the general scheme of the whole composition. In practice, it was realized with typical Baroque inventiveness and through the employment of a variety of artistic means: that is to say that the craftsman's play with space revealed a close dependence on the many visual arts of the Baroque period, in which the frame 'at times occupied more space than the central representation, and gathered into itself the fundamental symbols of the age'.[70] For that reason we cannot doubt that Grigoriy Shumayev was well acquainted with icon painting, and specially with the Russian iconostasis from the mid-seventeenth century to the early eighteenth. But he also knew examples of late Gothic altars, the popular *vertep* puppet theatre, as well as decorative sculpture, graphic art and the stylized painted portrait (*parsuna*). Clearly, he also had available to him compendia of emblems and allegories, as well as textbooks on poetics and rhetoric – the basis of all the arts and learning. As a result his work was taken as a synthesis of the arts – of theatre, painting, architecture, sculpture and literature. The artistic language that embodied this synthesis was known as the 'mirror of life' or 'theatre of the world', and in consequence this was also applied to the Christian model of the world. In embodying this, the theatre played a special role, because the formula 'vita est scaena similis' was one of the most popular such formulations of Baroque culture, representing the world as a theatre and people as actors. And everything that the viewer of the iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev saw belonged to a complex semiotic



40 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: detail showing the Mother of God.



system. Its peculiarity was that it did not copy reality, but on the contrary strove for differentiation from it.

A special role in the conception of the iconostasis was played by painting and its system of perspective. The spectator's gaze and play of imagination were dictated by the fact that the top and lateral sides of the casing-frame were canted inwards. This presupposed a single point of view, hence Renaissance linear perspective. This perspectival scheme, however, was augmented by the reverse perspective characteristic of the medieval icon. The optical system of the Renaissance 'window' presupposed the illusion of entering into another world, and was orientated towards metaphor and the apprehension of the heavenly world by analogy with the earthly sphere. The iconic perspective reinforced such cognition, since it was predicated on the prospect of the other world, on apprehending it as it really was, and not on how it might seem to be.

This collision of iconic perspective with that of the Renaissance picture was clearly manifest in the picturesque treatment of the huge relief figures of Christ, the Mother of God and St John that clearly dominated all the remaining painted, sculptural and architectural representations (illus. 40, 41). Here the craftsman attempted to locate a middle ground on which the real human forms were not distinctly perceptible. They only seemed real, alluding to reality and stirring the imagination. The abstraction and unworldliness of the medieval icon are here agitated by a wave of emotion. The head of Christ is angled towards the left shoulder. His face expresses calmness and suffering, emphasized by the appearance of the figures of the Mother of God and St John. Their poses and gestures convey not only the grief, but also the magnitude of the action unfolding. Their lines of vision meet at a point directly in front of Christ's face. A clear linear perspective is seen also in the depiction of paradise as the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is included within the canopy and clearly has a symbolic sense: paradise had been lost, but has been returned to us thanks to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ (illus. 38). We can assume that the illusionism of Renaissance perspective also corresponded to this possibility of entering into paradise and viewing it through a window as something 'real'.

41 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: detail showing St John the Divine.

Incidentally, this feeling would have been strengthened by the fact that the canopy was inclined towards the centre, as though reflecting the earthly Jerusalem that was the background to Christ's Crucifixion. That is to say that the Heavenly Jerusalem was to be taken as a mirror image of the earthly Jerusalem. The world was revealed as 'crowned with the beauty of Heaven', if we recollect the words of Dmitriy Rostovsky from his 'Comedy on the Nativity of Christ'.[71] In 1762 a description of the cross was compiled according to information given by Grigoriy Shumayev himself. 'Such shall be the cross', began this document, clearly revealing the peculiarities of the rhetorical mindset of the age. First came a description of paradise as it was depicted on the canopy.

> Up above, in the clouds, there shall also be a world. Peter and Paul and the great martyr Catherine hold wreaths and crowns, also branches. The heavenly Jerusalem, with twelve gates. The city is four sided by the measure of the angel. The construction of its wall has 144 cubits. And in the making of this city its walls of clear glass are adorned with all kinds of precious stones: 'the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst . . . and the street of the city was pure gold, as if it were transparent glass . . . and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' In it is 'a pure water of the river of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . . and on either side of the river was there the tree of life . . . and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations . . . the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it . . . blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb'.[72]

From this description we can see that the craftsman took the description of the Heavenly Jerusalem by St John the Divine (Revelation 21–2) as a mirror image ('and here there shall be the world') of the historic earthly Jerusalem.

In Old Russian icons, as a rule, paradise was denoted by a separate segment of space that made it distinct from heaven. Usually it was separated off by a delicate framing line. In icons of the second half of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth, paradise, as a segment of heaven, began to be framed with clouds. The heavenly powers – angels, seraphim, cherubim – might also form this frame, symbolizing the propinquity of the heavenly and the earthly, as we have also seen the reflection of the heavenly in the earthly. But the depiction of paradise as the Heavenly City, surrounded by a fortress wall, appears in Russia under the influence of Western iconography, particularly from illustrations in Johannes Piscator's German translation of the Bible, and also of the new Western Latin rhetoric, which dictated new devices for constructing the artistic space of the icon.[73]

All twelve gates of the city, in form like Renaissance portals with columns and triangular porticos, were closed, and in front of them, facing the spectator, were figures of the Righteous with

kneeling angels. Within the city one could discern churches and monasteries, and also the 'River of Life', whose source was the scene of the Last Supper within a circular frame – the origin of the Mystery of the Eucharist. In accordance with the Baroque principle of contrastive opposition, on the lower (opposite) side of the frame is represented the 'River of Fire' in hell where the souls of sinners are tormented, while the perspectival picture of New Jerusalem is contrasted with a representation of earthly Jerusalem, where the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ took place. Following the principles of Baroque poetics, the dark space of evil is located beside the space of virtue. Thus hell was deliberately placed at the very bottom, implying that it continued outside the frame. Incidentally, the description of sins was so detailed that the most varied social types who had 'left the true path' could be made out in hell. Thither went 'those consumed in fire who died not having recognized the Lord', 'bishops who did not provide their flock with a message of delivery', 'nuns who were unworthy of their holy calling and did not live appropriately', 'tradesmen who bought and sold by intrigue and deception', 'the female sex for their charms and for excessive whitening of their faces', 'farmers who did not respect Sabbath days', 'beggars who became rich through accepting alms', and also drunkards, fornicators, usurers and bearers of false witness.[74] All these wicked souls had fallen into 'deepest Hell', whose reality was made more convincing by the way all scenes 'departed' beyond the limits of the frame.

The Neoplatonic aesthetic of the Renaissance and the Baroque never for a moment let it be forgotten that the world surrounding the human being was full of signs that needed to be deciphered. To 'know' something in the Baroque period meant to explicate it, as the margins of books and icons make clear. As we know, in the Middle Ages the margins of a manuscript could contain notes relating to everyday life: in the scribe's and reader's consciousness they were not of a piece with the sacred text; thus the marginal space represented a 'blank wall', an externally impenetrable boundary for the sacred central area.[75] In the Baroque period the same margins of books and icons are covered with innumerable references and comments; the latter incidentally are not backed up by proof, rather by simple juxtaposition – the particular form of knowledge that differentiated the scholarship of the seventeenth century from that of the nineteenth. The spectator would also find expositions and commentaries included on the frames of the iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev. They were situated low down, in cartouches depicting cherubs intended to symbolize the link between religious experience and scholarly knowledge.
In the medieval icon the word strove for fusion with the picture. It is no coincidence that the Byzantines gave both a pictorial representation and a written description the single name 'writing', while the verb 'to write' applied (and in Russian still applies) to both.[76] The numerous comments and elucidations on the iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev bear witness to the fact that in a Baroque icon the word attempted to represent the multivalency of the symbol; it was after all a component of the play with time and space. For that reason the names of the heavenly powers, of all kinds of saints and biblical passages, were invitations to apprehend the meaning of the pictures, causing the apprehending consciousness now to be transported to biblical times, now to live within the time-span of human



history – for example side by side with the names of Russian saints or of the tsars Peter I and Peter III.

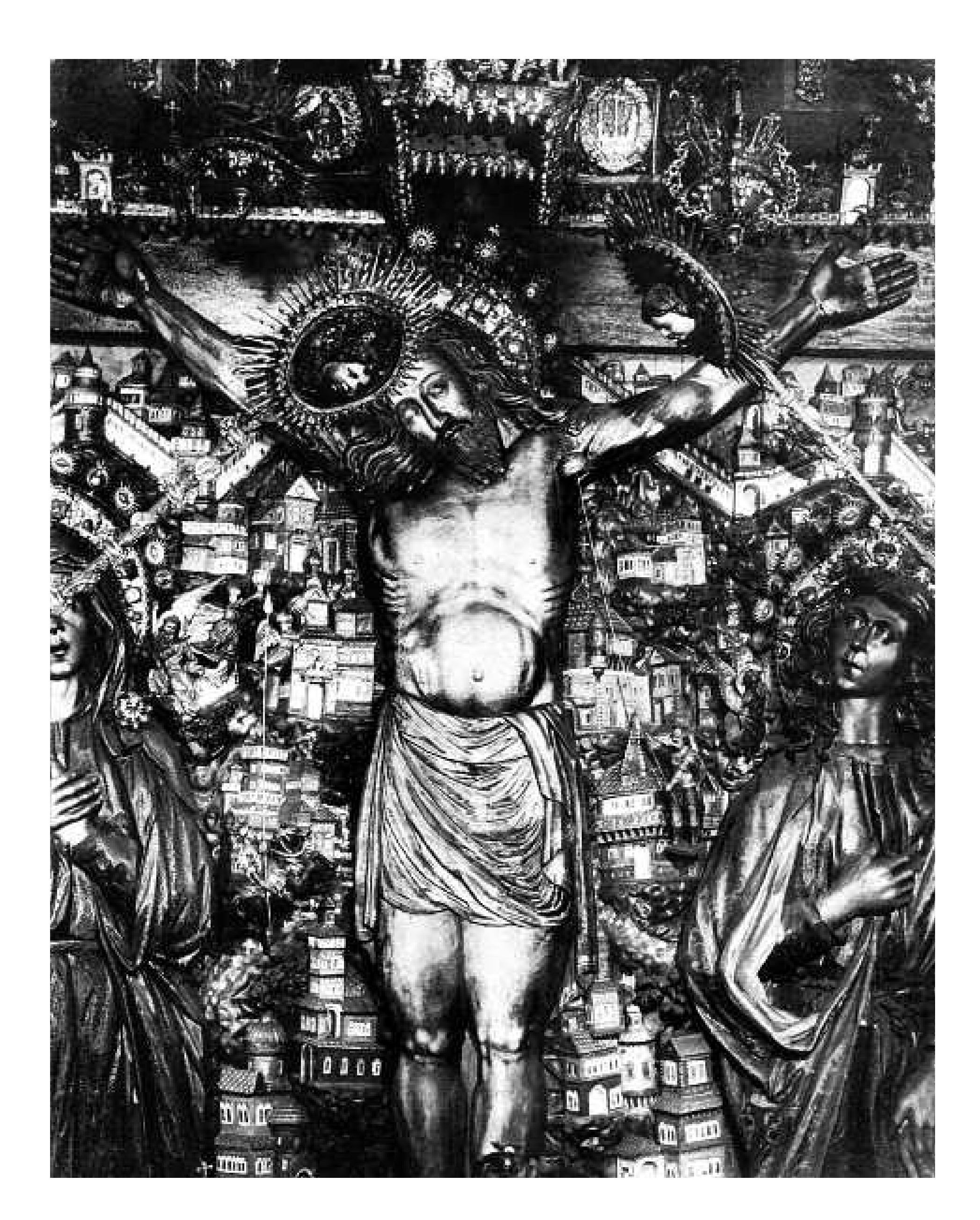
This superimposition of the real upon mythopoetic space also affected the very detailed map of the land of Judaea (illus. 38). Aspiring to historical and geographical exactitude, the Holy Land included a variety of 'locations' derived from the biblical and historical scholarship of the time; and in accordance with these ideas it was totally filled with churches and monasteries in which the righteous life could be led, such as the Armenian monastery of St James, the son of Zebedee, the Armenian church of St George, the church of the Mother of God of the Nestorians, and also a mass of Greek churches and monasteries. To strengthen the illusion of reality, a 'Turkish shrine and various schools in its precincts', a 'monastery of the Syrians' and a 'church of All Saints within which are 80 chapels of various heretical beliefs' enter into the same space. But here there are also places mentioned in the Gospels as being connected with the Saviour's Way of the Cross: the house of Pilate and the house of Caiaphas, the cell where Christ was imprisoned, the Garden of Gethsemane. Here is the inscription: 'The place where Christ was made to carry the cross, and Simon the Cyrenian helped him, and the woman Veronica wiped his face with a cloth', and also references to the events following on from the Crucifixion – the Entombment, the Resurrection and the Ascension. All these were signs of the world in whose decipherment the 'frame of tabulation' is to be included. Within it the

42 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: detail showing cartouches with explanatory inscriptions.

viewer would find a world of numbers, letters and words (illus. 42). The numbers beside the pictures directed the consciousness precisely to that frame of tabulation that signified the appearance of a new type of visual rhetoric.

The rhetorical rules of the Baroque were on clear display in the representation of biblical, particularly Gospel, parables on the outer sides of the casing frame. In this respect they resembled the sermons that would frame the texts of the Lives of the saints in printed editions.[77] The educated person, being well acquainted with literature of this kind, picked up their meaning without difficulty. Moreover, their composition also revealed the Baroque 'framing-up of meaning', since at its centre the viewer would find scenes of the life of Christ and the Mother of God, and only afterwards pictures of the parables of the beggar Lazarus, of the blind and the lame, of the vineyard and other scenes that surrounded these. All of them summoned one to considerations of moral values and of the righteous life, revealed as the main condition for entry into that heavenly kingdom revealed at the very top of the casing. Here *the person was instructed by the frame* – as to what he was supposed, or supposed not, to be. But how was a Christian supposed to behave? He should be respectable and God-fearing, while leading a hardworking life. And it was just such themes that echoed through these painted tales and legends, which strove mightily to persuade people that the meaning and goal of human history resided in the central image of Christ crucified. In other words, a complex sermon in paint was revealed to the spectator's gaze, reminding him or her of the sacred core of Christian culture: the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ. Establishing a hierarchy of sins and good deeds, the painted parables framed a space of absolute sinlessness and harmony. This is no accident. A parable is both a direct and allegorical vehicle for advice, easy to remember, close to indirect converse, to proverb, to riddle. Hence in the Baroque period parables totally dominated visual art and literature with their concern for the human soul. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Church, naturally, concerned itself with the dissemination of Old and New Testament parables, among which in Russia the most popular were those of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Blind and the Lame, the Rich Man and the Poor Man (Dives and Lazarus), the Idle Servant who buried his talent in the earth, and others that came within the painterly frame of the Shumayev iconostasis. As the 'threshold' to understanding the central image, it was they that were called upon to purify the soul of a person, before he or she gazed upon the picture of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

As far as the painterly composition of the parables was concerned, it repeated, for example, the composition of the engraving of *King David the Psalmist* by Afanasiy Trukhmensky (see above) and the compositional motifs in a well-known Russian text, *The Spiritual Book of Emblems for Instruction in the Christian Faith with Consoling Figures and Edifying Words* (1743), whose source was a book of emblems, *Emblemata sacra* (1625), by Johann Saubert.[78] Thus the discrete scenes on the outer sides of the Shumayev casing were constructed on the principle of an unbreakable link between text and image, as if they were emblems, and represented a new type of Baroque icon of moral-philosophical character. Following the aesthetic principles of the Baroque, this was based on the category of 'swift reason' as an inventive



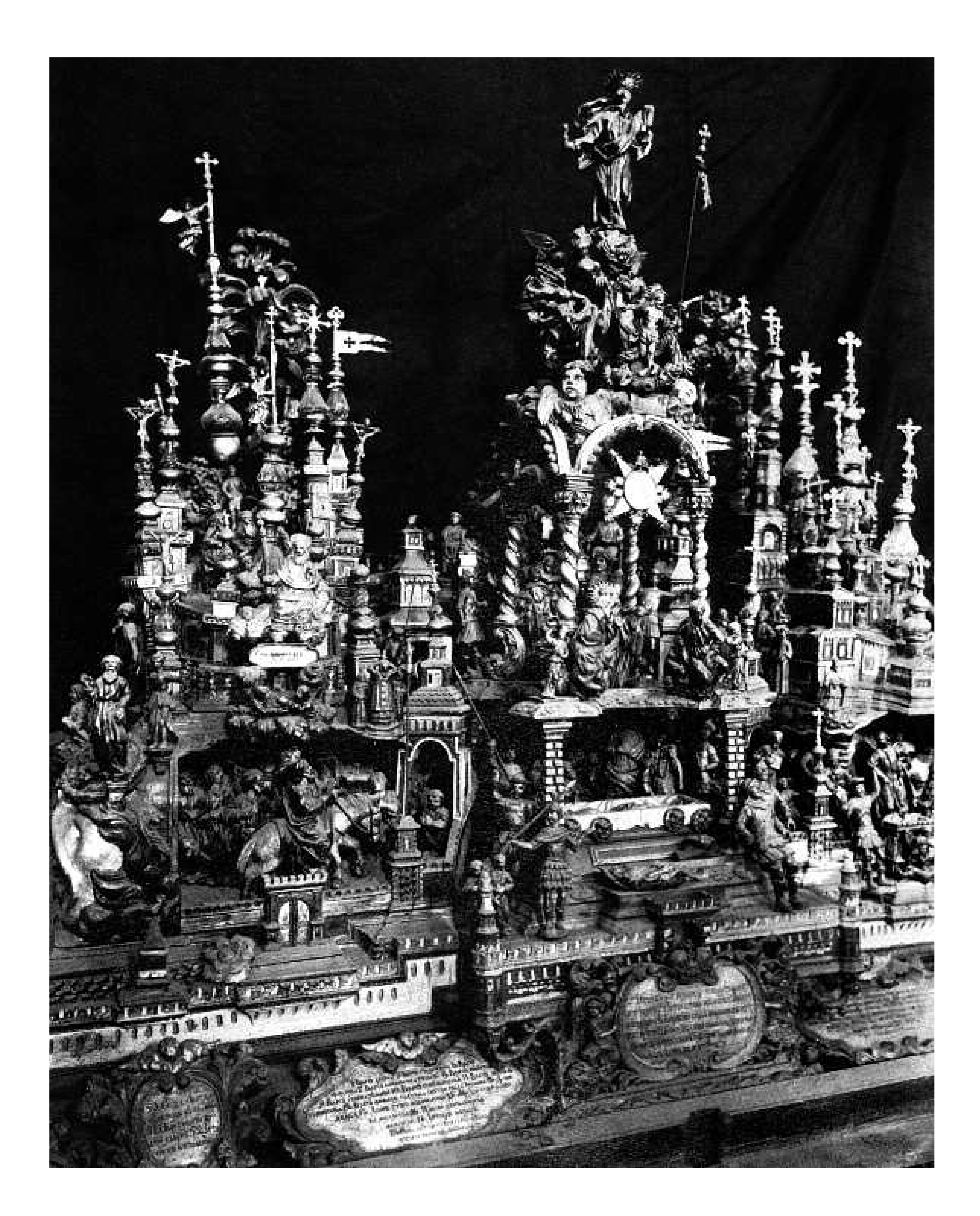
capability closely linked with feelings and sensations. It is noteworthy that the same type of composition is also found in popular prints, where the top half is occupied by the figure of the saint, and the lower by a relevant homily. This kind of composition is in general terms reflected in the iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev as well. If in the central part the complexities of the frame were a commentary on the main symbol, the *Crucifixion*, at the sides by contrast the picturesque frame with edifying stories revealed its full powers: it was a commentary on humanity, the products of its mind, its

43 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: detail of the central composition.

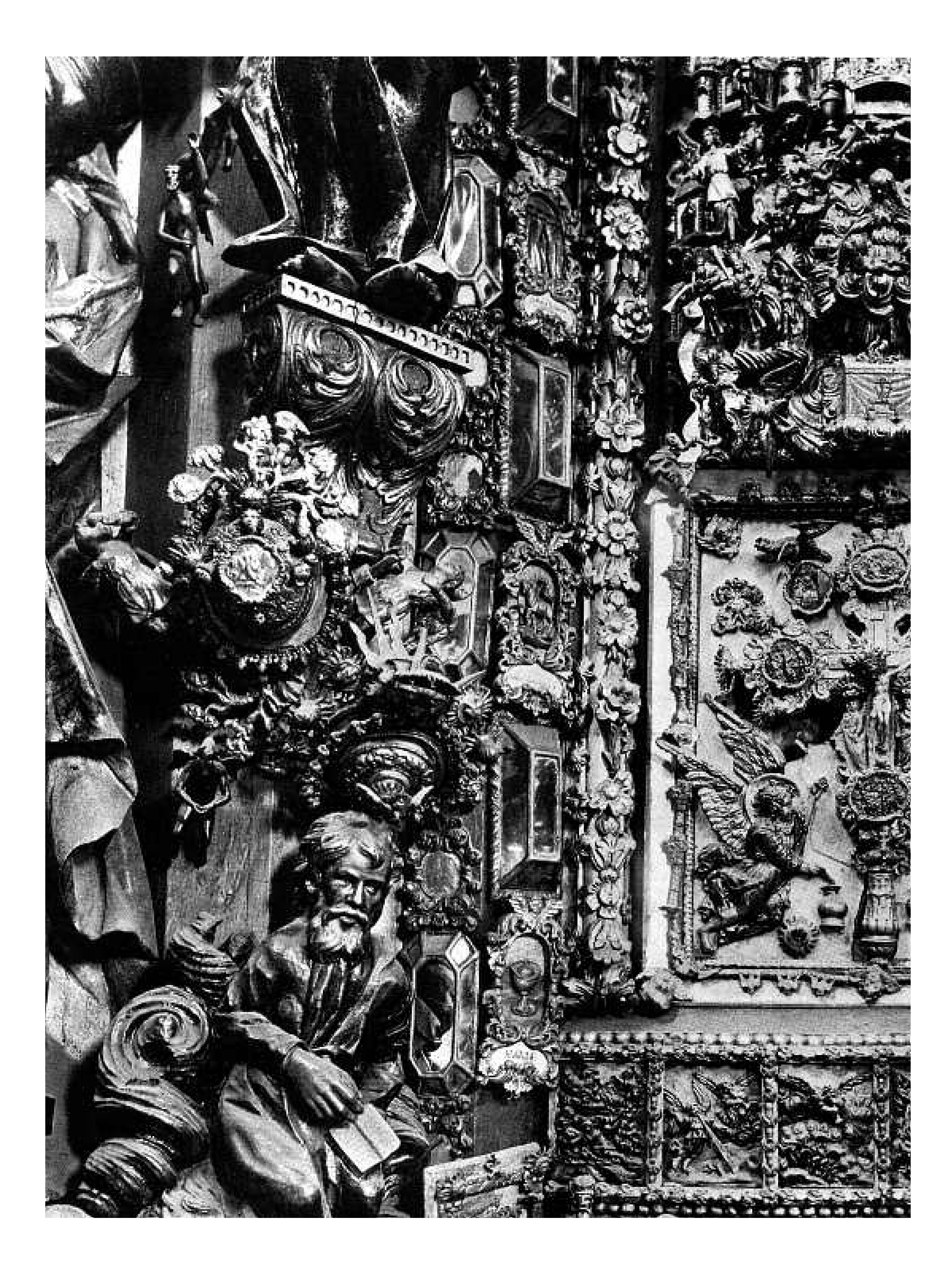
strivings and activity, finally its body. In other words, the textual frame in the Baroque period, in explicating sacred images, required one to put faith in the products of human *reason*. In becoming objects of faith, they turned into *icons*.

Many of the other framing constructions of Grigoriy Shumayev's iconostasis turn out to be distant copies of lesser architectural forms. But how did rhetoric adapt them to the tasks before it? The crucified Christ in the centre of the whole composition is shown against a background of the earthly city of Jerusalem, embodied in numerous architectural elements – a fortified wall, houses, churches and monasteries – whose forms are reminiscent of the architecture of the Moscow Kremlin in the second half of the seventeenth century (illus. 43).[79] The spectator saw these not only in the central part of the composition, but also on the upper and lateral elements of the casing. Their picturesque brilliance united the aesthetic space of the frame and the centre into a single whole. But the main peculiarity of these structures lay in their being only simulacra of architectural forms, signs standing in for them, not the architectural forms themselves. These were architectural fantasies, distantly related to the architectural visions of Giovanni Piranesi or Hubert Robert. Elements of real architecture were here placed in fantastical combinations, whose aim was merely to produce an effect of reality. Thus the Russian onion domes on churches, the white window surrounds with broken pediments, the high porches, the fortress towers resembling those of the Moscow Kremlin, and much else were linked or collided with each other not by the rules of architecture but by those of painting – of direct and reverse perspective. They were striving towards theatrical architectural decor, which in the Baroque age aimed towards imaginary rather than authentic images. And this architectural decor drew the picture of a fantastical city before a person's eyes. In it the roofs of houses were of gold and silver, while their windows were inlaid with thousands of pieces of mirror glass. The trees were laden with bunches of bright red grapes, while the River Jordan was adorned with coloured and reflective glass. All this was aimed towards creating the effect of a reality, the creation of an illusion of indescribable beauty in the appearance of the land of the Bible.

In the lower part of the Shumayev iconostasis the spectator could find the symbolic architecture of the church where Christ was entombed (illus. 44). Here the culture of the Baroque displayed its affection for spaces that were laden with the half-light of secrecy, such as the cell, the sacristy, the crypt and every kind of concealed corner. All these were favoured images of writers, artists and architects of the Baroque age.[80] It was in the hidden niches of these quasi-'monasteries' that Grigoriy Shumayev located the main events of the Golgotha drama: the Entry into Jerusalem, the Entombment and the Ascension. On one of these structures can be seen a fairly long canopy woven on to Solomonic columns, symbolizing a garden. The peculiarity of its architecture derived from the biblical description of the Temple of Solomon, which mentioned pillars interwoven with a network of branches symbolizing eternal life (1 Kings 7:8, 20, 42). But, striving for multivalency of the symbol and for making this canopy comprehensible as a complex metaphor, the craftsman situated the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane beneath it, giving it the title 'The garden in which Judas with



44 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: detail of lower left, showing the church of the Holy Sepulchre.



45 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: details of the framing showing allegories of Christ's torments, with mirror glass and vegetal decorative motifs.

a kiss betrayed Christ to the lawless Jews'. Beside the sculpted figures in the centre of the scene there was placed a twisted column with the symbol of the threefold nature of God – an eight-pointed star sparkling with mirror glass and precious stones, with a triangle inside it. In the eyes of contemporary viewers it represented a comparison of the space of the Garden of Gethsemane with that of paradise, within which God resided. But it also indicated that the canopy was the architectural framing for a throne. That is why it was placed above the tomb of the Lord. Moreover, this column clearly caused the viewer to associate the whole lower part of the framing structure with an altar, as it projected forward like a Western altar predella.

The canopy was crowned with a multitude of angels and cherubim: their purpose was to serve at the throne of the Almighty, supporting and framing it. At its front was John the Baptist, who was turned to the spectators, gesturing towards the events of the Gospel story taking place on earth. Above other recesses there rose up churches of fantastic architecture, with translucent glass domes and crowned with crosses of varying kinds. All of them, forming components of the 'intelligent design', were dedicated to the name of Christ Crucified and glorified the purifying power of the Crucifixion; they too were a commentary on the drama of Golgotha. The attentive viewer could make out crosses with the body of Christ, in each case different in form from the others, so as to emphasize the sufferings of the God-Man. The very symbol of the Crucifixion itself – the Cross – took various forms. The domes of the churches were crowned with four-pointed or eight-pointed crosses, some of them featuring a circular mandorla and rays. Among them too was a cross inscribed on a banner above the Russian imperial crest. Here Baroque rhetoric made play with symbol, and once again strove for multivalency and complication; it was responsible for placing these simulacra of architectural forms at the very dividing line between the real and the unreal, the sacral and the mundane. Finally, all these games with space also inspired the forms of the pictorial frame. These were lesser baguette frames of wood and beaten tinplate, painted and gilded to look like strings of pearls and laurel branches – baguettes smooth and stepped, convex and concave. Their architectural decor had lost its former function of organizing the wall: it had turned into simple ornament, permitting the eye to concentrate on what was within. The viewer would find these lesser frames at the very bottom, in the foreground of the iconostasis.

A particular role was played in the Shumayev iconostasis by the *mirror,* actual and metaphorical. As we may recollect, Plato condemned the 'mirror' of imitative painting. The age of the Renaissance made the mirror into an instrument of cognition. But in the visual rhetoric of the Baroque in the seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth the illusionism of the mirror became one of the most important concepts for generating meaning.
A re-evaluation of the category of likeness, of the contrast of light and darkness, and also the further development of the idea of optical illusion, are linked with this: as a result, the theory of perception underwent a series of substantial shifts – the greatest minds of the age, Newton and Locke, addressed themselves to the very subject of perception, that is, to the observer.[81] The category of the 'microcosm', which thanks to the Neoplatonic tradition occupied a dominant position in the

epistemology of that time, is linked with the device of mirrored reflection. The concept of 'microcosm' indicated that the existing earthly sphere is really a mirrored reflection of the heavenly sphere, that is, of a sequence and configuration of the highest spheres. For that reason the mirror was taken to be an instrument of cognition: it reproduced the mysteries of the world, bringing to the surface everything that might have slipped beyond the direct human gaze.

It has already been noted that on the level of iconography the canopy of the Shumayev iconostasis reflected the earthly Jerusalem. But the essential thing is that this effect was supported by actual mirror reflections. In the context of Neoplatonic aesthetics they invited one to comprehend heaven by analogy with the earth. Pieces of mirror glass adorned not just the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem, but were met with abundantly on frames, backgrounds, objects and windows.[82] Two 'mirror' frames were particularly prominent within the whole grandiose composition: one of them was formed of allegorical representations of the sufferings of Christ (beloved of the Baroque), between which were located little octagons of mirror glass, the other of multi-faceted glass crystals resembling cut gemstones. Their reflective facets were in fact intersected by cubes that glittered with the riches of both divine and down-to-earth colours, so letting the spectator behold not only the surrounding world, but also the heavenly world as well – the very space within the iconostasis. We know that the Russian iconostasis of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries contained images and texts that a human being could not scrutinize – only the eyes of the Highest could behold them. But the mirrors of the Shumayev iconostasis attempted to bring everything right before a person's eyes. In activating the imagination, they carried a person into the 'looking-glass land' of heavenly beings; they transformed a person from an observer into the object of observation from the point of view of the heavenly powers. That implies that with the help of the Baroque mirror the representation could 'exit' the frame, and also include within its conventional space actual objects – something that found a multitude of analogues in the visual art of the period. Thus documents state that the Moscow metropolitan Platon (1737–1812) permitted a 'royal door' to be made for an iconostasis 'from pieces of mirror glass, in which every object would be reflected a thousand times before the hierarch and the deacon in prayer'.[83] Pieces of glass could also decorate the exterior of a Baroque church. In Tsarskoye Selo, for example, the Empress Elizabeth ordered the architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli to build a church dedicated to the Ascension of Our Lord (1746–8), in whose altar windows (facing the garden) mirror glass was likewise inserted.[84]

To remove the boundary between the conventional world of the picture and the real world of the spectator was one of the chief tasks of artists in the Baroque age. Hence some of the most outstanding paintings of the time devoted attention to framed mirrors. One of the best-known examples is the picture by Velázquez known as *Las Meninas* (1656), to which Foucault devoted a famous essay. In this painting Velázquez depicted himself in his studio or in one of the rooms in the Escorial at work on a portrait of King Philip IV and his queen Marianna: we see the figures that served the artist as models; they have been taken outside the frame and are located on the same side as the spectator.

Nevertheless, they can be seen in the mirror on the opposite wall. Thus the two rulers' figures have been, as it were, transferred outside the space of the studio, beyond the frame of the mirror, which is depicted hanging side by side with other pictures.[85]

What we have here is the typical principle in Renaissance and Baroque poetics of double reflection, a sign of the new poetics. An actual mirror *changed the meaning of the category of likeness*, and brought within the frame something that was foreign in principle to the medieval icon – the *real world* of the viewer. It used to be thought that in so far as the world had been created by God, it carried God's features upon it. Moreover, God was perfecting the world, endowing it with motion towards Himself. Hence the revelation in the Renaissance and Baroque periods of the world's variegation was an aspect of the cognition of the divine. And if the medieval icon excluded shadow – since divine beauty presupposed an inner source of light – the icon of the Baroque age admitted shadows even in the rendering of Christ and the saints.[86] Thereby it pointed to the resemblance of the world to its Creator, to the fact that resemblance was a much more complex thing than had previously been supposed: resemblance included the principle of mirrored reflection, thanks to which optical illusion could gather into itself all the multifarious nature of the world – directing it towards a single centre, God. This was why the mirror, presented by Karion Istomin as a tool of cognition and salvation, was also capable of reflecting shadow:

> When to a person an angel rightfully
> Reveals a looking glass for his salvation
> Then in looking at it one knows what is clear,
> what dark,
> And directs one's thoughts thereto.[87]

The mirror helped one more vividly to behold God, overcoming death itself – so supposed Stephan Yavorsky in his epitaph on Varlaam Yasinsky:

> The dead body was shrouded in gloom.
> I could not clearly make out the threefold light,
> But as in a mirror immeasurably far off
> I beheld my Saviour with the eye of faith.
> But after this mirror will have destroyed death
> I expect to see God more vividly.[88]

With the help of a mirror the countenances of saints were illuminated with flashes of unearthly light:

> The saints will be surrounded by clear light,
> They shall see themselves with real flesh,
> Possessing splendid illumination upon
> themselves.[89]

So if in the Middle Ages mirrors were forbidden in Russian churches, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they could not only be found there, but were also lavishly framed as if they were icons. Mirrors even had little doors in front of them as if they were folding 'arks' (illus. 46).[90]

In other words, the mirror frames of the Shumayev iconostasis evoked a harmonious 'movement' of the artistic space between the sacred and the worldly along their conjoined axis. It was they that dictated the typical Baroque procedure involving *light*, which transformed



everything that took place into unbroken hallucination. Real and illusory pictures continually changed their status thanks to the play of reflections of a huge number of mirrors great and small. Whatever the illumination, daylight or candlelight, the reflective frames 'caught' the form and enveloped it in an effect of mistiness. The light was ceaselessly laden with shadow, while the darkness of niches and hollows was perceived as no less than ever-thickening shade, since by the rules of Baroque poetics light was contrasted with darkness, the embodiment of the force of evil. God permitted evil, so as to set off the good. Thus shadow, gloom, the cracks and hollows of the Shumayev iconostasis reminded the viewer over and over again that it was precisely God who uttered the words 'Let there be light', and simultaneously created the splendid mirror of the world, which created clear light and colour. In the artistic space of the iconostasis the world of light was

46 A 17th-century framed looking-glass.



drawn forth out of the gloom, was created as if at the very boundary of the visible and invisible, the worldly and the sacred. The purpose after all of playing with light was both to hide and to reveal something secret. In this sense the domes of the churches, which the craftsman had made of translucent coloured glass, became – remarkably numerous as they were – symbols of the divine

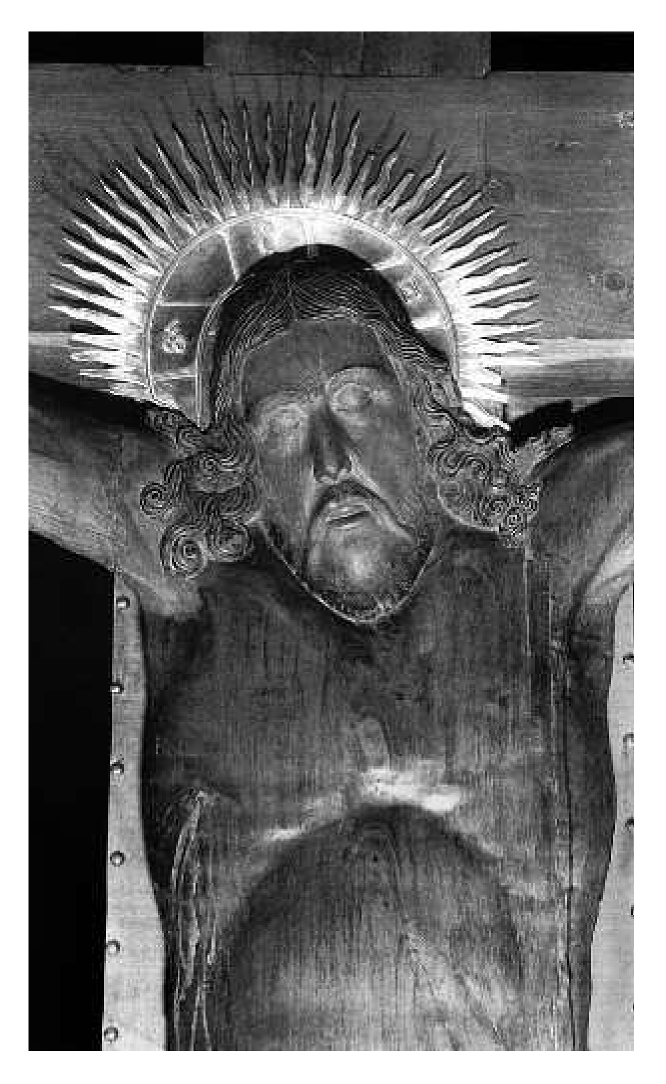
47 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev, an icon on a mirror background: *The Cross of Christ is a Spiritual Sword*.

light, capable of penetrating the 'unclarity' of earthly darkness. These glass domes bore colour and light simultaneously within them, reflecting them, defining and strengthening them, and they themselves were reflected in the mirror of the fused materials that had been turned into precious stones in honour of the Universal Creator.

The nimbus or halo represents a concentration of the divine energies. As with a church dome, it is perceived as framing the realm of grace. But the craftsman of the Baroque period transformed the haloes into a complex commentary on this idea. Thus the head of Christ was surrounded by a crown adorned with precious stones set upon a gold background, itself segmented. This halo was very luxuriant: its richness and brilliance matched the status of the figure represented. Those of the Mother of God and the Baptist, by contrast, included figures of angels as well as precious stones. The haloes of the four Evangelists were even more complex. Within them the viewer could find 'reflected' images of the Saviour Not Made by Hands and of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. They were bordered by lines of angelic heads and stars, as though repeating insistently the message that this sphere was fully accessible to the world in which the spectator was located.

Finally, the particular role that light plays in the penetrability of the boundary between the sacred and the profane was reinforced by the two large icons on a reflective background – the *Cross of Christ is a Spiritual Sword* and the *Resurrection*, symmetrically located either side of the icon casing (illus. 47). The margins and background of these icons were made of mirror glass, but they are separated one from the other by a moulded tinware frame showing, in the words of the craftsman, 'the cherubic powers'. This small frame is the boundary of the flow between, and mutual interpenetration of, the centre and the periphery. The frame of an icon, which once served as an impenetrable ark defending a holy site, has suddenly acquired an unstable, wavering quality. Its mirror has begun to reflect the real world just like the 'mirror' of the central iconic panel. Meanwhile, the flickering quality of this boundary was strengthened by the location on it of those heavenly powers that were called upon to mediate between the heavenly and the earthly: angels, seraphim and cherubim. In the biblical texts they are characterized as the powers closest to God, since they surround his heavenly throne. They are also the guardians of paradise and supporters of God in his earthly manifestations (Genesis 3:24). Thus the appearance of the heavenly powers on the frames of icons and iconostases rhetorically juxtaposed the Creator to creation, and brought the icon close to the viewer. But here a special part in the aesthetic space of the Shumayev iconostasis begins to be played by three-dimensional sculpture.

We know that from time to time the Orthodox Church would criticize sculpture, the three-dimensional representation of the human form, which was widespread in the art of the Catholic world. Meanwhile, however, the new type of culture that had begun to take shape in Russia after the mid-seventeenth century paid close attention to sculpture, which began to find its way into the official churches of Muscovite Russia under the influence of new aesthetic ideas that came from Poland and Lithuania through Ukraine and Belorussia. Consequently, Russian iconostases of the later seventeenth century and the eighteenth began to feature carved representations of God the Father, Christ, the



Mother of God, the prophets, apostles and heavenly powers. In the church of the Sign (1690–1704) at Dubrovitsy, near Moscow, sculpture even takes the place of wall painting, and is explained through 'Latin' titles at the command of its patron, Prince B. A. Golitsyn. A little earlier, free-standing crucifixes with an attendant Mother of God and John the Evangelist appeared in Moscow court churches. They were made in the workshops of the Armoury Chamber, where carvers from abroad (Belorussia and Poland) worked. One such crucifix was in a chapel for prayer at the church of the Elevation of the Cross in the Great Kremlin Palace; it was attributed to the Belorussian senior monk Ippolit, while its painting was by the artist Karp Zolotaryov (illus. 48).[91] Crucifixes in the round with attendant figures also began to be placed on the upper parts of iconostases.

The iconostasis of the church of the Ascension in the Residential Palace of the Moscow Kremlin, for example, is surmounted by such a crucifix. It was made, again, by craftsmen at the Armoury Chamber, led by the Belorussian master Klim Mikhaylov in 1678–9. N. Sobolev comments on all these innovations:

> On ledges of these splendid iconostases and casings an abundance of figures of apostles, prophets and angels holding fans or instruments of the passion in their hands appear; they are dressed in garments wafted by the wind around their bodies and are placed in somewhat theatrical poses, full of emotion. Above the iconostases, painted and carved Crucifixion scenes with attendant figures are attached . . . Often these Crucifixions are encased in an enveloping frame of fantastical form, consisting of carved clouds, heads of cherubim or flowers.[92]

It was under the influence of such models that the crucifix of the merchant Shumayev was made, set within a Renaissance 'window'-style frame. The three-dimensional sculpture, located in a frame more suitable for an icon or secular painting, was subject to the rules of painterly form rather than sculptural. The craftsman executed the figures of

48 The Elder Ippolit(?), Karp Zolotaryov. *Crucifixion* (detail), 1680. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.

Christ, the Mother of God and the apostle in low relief, so no more than hinting at sculptural form, which potentially could have made it look like real sculpture. As it was painted, the sculpture responded to the task of creating the effect of 'presence'. The same task was fulfilled by other representations of God the Father, Christ, the Mother of God, biblical figures and saints, and the materialized souls of the righteous and the sinful; there were also two imperial personages – Peter I and Peter III. All these numberless little figures were facing in different directions: some towards each other, some to the centre, some to the spectator. Full of passionate feeling, they gave a visible outline to the space; at the same time all played their roles, whose meanings, being derived from biblical texts, were known in advance. In some respects they resembled figures from the dolls' houses that were particularly widespread in Western Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[93]

This 'doll-like' quality of the people within the frame evoked associations beyond popular mythology and popular prints: thanks to the mirrors and their reflections they were 'animated' and 'moved about'. We should remember that a statue always demands seriousness, presence and contemplation – a doll, playfulness and participation. But when a statue tends towards simplification, it at once stimulates an ambivalent attitude towards itself.[94] For that reason, as if on the stage of a popular theatre, a puppet show or in a 'play house', Shumayev's sculptures actively inaugurated an artistic space. In this they were reminiscent both of school theatre of the Baroque age, in which 'living sculpture' made play with special kinds of gestures,[95] and also of how sculpture was represented in eighteenth-century art, on the frames of paintings and drawings. For example, on Ivan Grekov's icon of the *Loyal Prince Alexander Nevsky and the Great Martyr Theodore* (illus. 19) the outlines of the winged figures seemed to go beyond the system of representation and were placed on the frame, strengthening the illusory quality of the representation. In this respect they corresponded to numerous sculptural and painterly figures from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, striving to go beyond the limits of frames and parapets in their readiness to erase the boundary between the real and conventionalized worlds. And if the optics of Renaissance and Baroque painting permitted the viewer to enter freely into another world, as if through a door or a window, then a frame bearing sculpture always created the illusion of movement the opposite way, since it 'transposed' personages from the conventional into the real world.

In Grigoriy Shumayev's iconostasis this movement in the direction of the spectator was strengthened by the representations of heavenly powers on the framing structures – angels, cherubim and seraphim – and also of the souls of the righteous and sinners. In the representational system of Baroque culture a human soul perpetually resided between heaven and hell. Hence the image of Jacob's ladder acquired a particular significance within this system: a dangerous mode of transport, with many steps, between eternal torment and the blessed condition of paradise. Hence too the movement of souls of the righteous and sinners along the vertical axis of Shumayev's framing-case did not only emphasize the community of all the tiers of the universe (paradise, earth and hell), but also temporarily deprived it of the function of a 'window into the world', and turned it into a 'stepladder to heaven', an image that goes back

to the first vision of the patriarch Jacob: 'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it' (Genesis 28:12). In Catholic iconography we know of numerous interpretations of the cross of Jesus as a stairway to heaven, and doubtless they were reconfigured and incorporated into our iconostasis.[96] This was all the more so since in the later seventeenth century and early eighteenth the 'ladder' was often encountered in literature and in theatrical pieces, on icons, the 'royal gates' of iconostases and engravings. Even looking at an icon of the Mother of God, a person of that time might see a ladder – her primeval symbol – as Stefan Yavorsky wrote:

> I behold thee, O ladder, leading us to God!
> Conduct me, Maria, to the lofty mansions.[97]

Often the ladder would be understood as a hierarchical model of the world, whose steps were the levels of the Christian cosmos, communicating with each other as a result of descent and elevation. That is why Baroque eschatological poems, as a rule, consisted of several parts, each of which would be dedicated to one of the levels of creation and the problem of reconciling them, as indeed in the Shumayev iconostasis. Thus 'The Ladder to Heaven', by an anonymous author of the first half of the seventeenth century, consisted of chapters titled 'Death', 'Judgement', 'Debate between the Body and the Soul', 'Gehenna' and 'The Heavenly Kingdom', and its description fully corresponded to the particular representation of the picture of the world in our iconostasis.[98] Interesting data can be extracted from an inventory item, made in 1762, of our iconostasis, which begins with a description of heaven and paradise, ending with a description of hell. So the understanding of the Christian picture of the world moved along a strict vertical axis: paradise – earth – hell. Before beginning a description of the Crucifixion, the central part of the iconostasis, however, the compiler gave an interpretation of its frame as a ladder along which angels and human souls passed in each direction:

> On the right-hand side there is the glory of God and the righteous go into the heavenly kingdom and there will be a meeting on the clouds and in heaven. On the left-hand side is the Lord's crown of thorns and the casting down of Satan from the heavens and from the throne into a fiery lake and all those with him doing his will.[99]

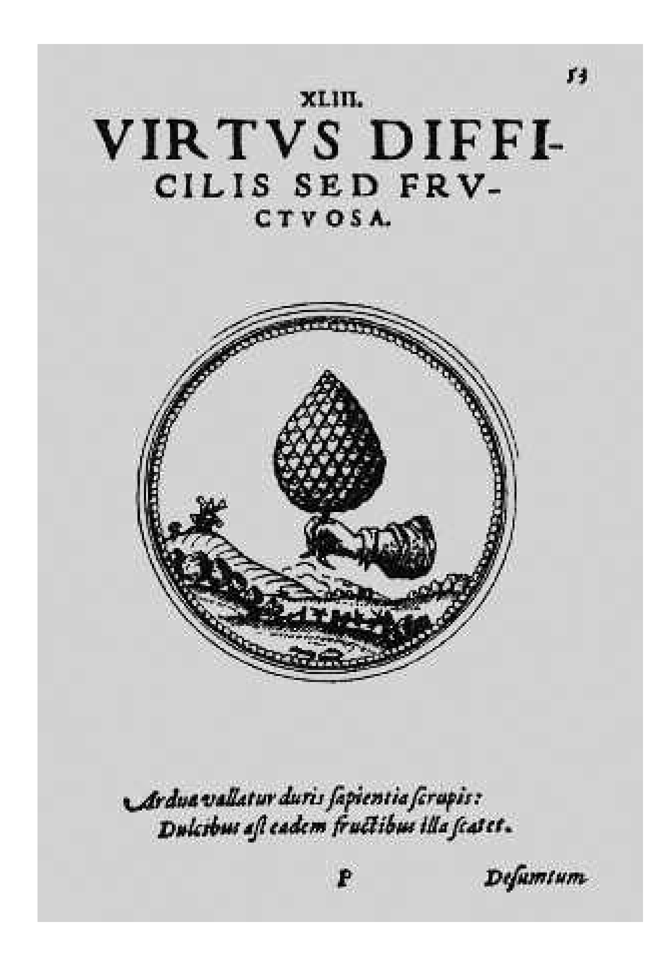
In other words the construction of a window-like frame was close, in the mentality of people of the time, to the building of a ladder.

On the Shumayev iconostasis this movement started from above, where the nine orders of angels were shown, and continued down to the ground, towards which angels bore Eucharistic vessels and the good tidings of the gospel. And it was precisely in the Baroque age that this movement of angels became more violently energized that ever before. Like the angels in Catholic pictures, the hosts of angels on Russian icons of the period hasten towards the holy figures with Eucharistic chalices bringing the gift of life eternal, thanks to communion with the unique Body of Christ. The iconography of angels in the seventeenth century becomes noticeably more complex,

since with their aid the invisible metaphysical space became visible and animated, while the 'world of objects' became dematerialized, turning simply into signs and images.[100] After all, the function of angels was constantly to comment upon and elucidate to humanity the mysteries of divine wisdom. Hence on the Shumayev iconostasis the angels 'receive the flowing blood of the Saviour', referring thus to the mystery of the Eucharist. It is they who plant crosses upon the cupolas of the churches, so indicating the main symbol of redemption, and also support the crowns of saints, emphasizing the descent upon them of divine grace. They also proclaim tidings of the Last Judgment: on the left-hand side of the frame we find numerous apocalyptic scenes and 'seven trumpeting angels'. Angels are likewise seated on the gateways to the Heavenly Jerusalem, since they are intermediaries between the earthly and heavenly realms. Finally, a special space is also reserved for an angelic manifestation: 'the place where an angel appeared to the shepherds'. In all this the sculptural representations of angels in the likeness of puppets on a stage constantly varied their form. They reincarnated themselves, appearing in different kinds of clothing and crowns. And only at the very bottom does their agitated movement calm down. Between the scenes of the *Entry into Jerusalem* and the *Entombment* two angels, winged but without haloes, stand quietly at the parapet. Their expressions, poses and gestures are directed towards the spectators, and it looks as if they might come to life, just as a 'dead' sculpture in a Baroque theatre might take on life and start acting. Meanwhile, their poses were inscribed into the general scheme of movement characteristic of all figures in the composition. This scheme did



49 Iconostasis of Grigoriy Shumayev: a goblet symbolizing thirst, one of Christ's torments.



50 'Virtue is hard but fruitful', an emblem from the compendium by Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum et emblematum* (1593).

not copy reality: the gestures merely indicated movement, as if they were puppets on a stage, and were calculated as an element of the effect of the composition as a whole.

In Grigoriy Shumayev's iconostasis we also see a multitude of representations and compositions that answer to descriptions in collections of emblems and allegories. Here there is a heavenly sphere in the form of a shining 'glory' with angels inside, God the Father in the form of the Ancient of Days, saints with wreaths and palm leaves in their hands and numerous symbols of the Orthodox faith contained in separate small frames. The central icon of the *Crucifixion* was even bordered by a whole frame made of allegorical representations of the Lord's sufferings, placed in cartouches between which were multifaceted pieces of mirror glass, in which they were reflected and multiplied (illus. 49). All this speaks of the fact that the craftsman had an excellent knowledge of iconological literature, which he employed to realize his *conceptus* (intention), understood in seventeenth-century Baroque aesthetics as the link between objects that were very remote from each other. Alongside Western European rhetorical concepts and poetics this literature had broad penetration into Russia at the time of Tsar Aleksey: in the libraries of Simeon Polotsky and Sil'vestr Medvedev, for example, there were what is considered the first book of emblems, Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum liber* (1531), together with such volumes as *Iconologia* (1593) by Cesare Ripa, *Symbolorum et emblematum* (1593) by Joachim Camerarius (illus. 50) and *De symbolica aegyptiorum sapientia* (1618) by Nicolas Caussin.[101] In the eighteenth century these books were augmented by Russian volumes, the first of which was the famous *Symbols and Emblems*, derived from emblem books by Daniel de la Feuille and Camerarius, that Peter the Great had published in Amsterdam in 1705. In 1788 Nestor Maksimovich-Ambodik (1744–1812) published the first edition of *Selected Emblems and Symbols*, a Russian edition of an emblem book by the seventeenth-century Spanish writer Diego de Saavedra Fajardo.[102] Finally, the two volumes of *Iconology; or, A Full Collection of Allegories, Emblems etc.* appeared in 1803.[103] All these books were not only well known to artists, sculptors, architects and decorators, but also served them as an immediate guide in the construction of every kind of framing that

the culture of the seventeenth, eighteenth and even early nineteenth centuries might demand.[104]

The understanding of emblems is opened up to us by the supplements and commentaries of Maksimovich-Ambodik (1744–1812), who gave detailed descriptions of emblems with the aim not only of presenting the artist with an understanding of the emblem, but also of inspiring him to the creation of symbolic images 'to attain to the significance of further emblems and symbols through his own reason'. In his opinion, the diligent study of such books could 'open the hidden mysteries of many other designs like these ones'.[105] In a section called 'A Brief Explanation of Emblems and Symbols' readers could find an interesting commentary on the structure and content of an emblem. The latter was defined as an 'intricate' small picture with a 'deliberated' inscription, and was a representation of some 'natural substance' or 'animated being'. The *subscriptio* of the classic emblem is defined by the editor as a 'symbol', that is to say a 'brief text, consisting of the witty expression of something in a few words'. The uniting of this image with a representation served as a 'guide' to the apprehension of the historical, political, moral or concealed meaning of 'another thing', since it summoned up a *figure of the intellect* in a human consciousness. In the process emblems were divided into 'divine', 'spiritual', 'historical', 'political', 'heraldic', 'moral' and 'mysterious' categories.

The section called 'Iconological Description of Emblematic Representations' was devoted to allegories of God, the angels and saints. It referred in particular to illustrations of God the Father in the form of the Ancient of Days, and also to some that had arrived from Catholic and Protestant iconography:

> God is shown on windblown wings, ancient of days, raised up above the heavens, carried on clouds by angels, holding in his hand the orb as a sign of his universal might. Or a revered ancient man, filled with greatness, seated on light clouds, making a blessing with his hand, partially covered by a wafting robe, and surrounded by angels, planets and stars.
> Or is presented in the form of a great shining undimmed light, towards which a great multitude of angels, seraphim, cherubim and others, directing their eyes, looking upwards with wonder, ceaselessly chant praise and glory to the eternal and unattainable Godhead.

The angels, named as 'Servants of God', were emblematically illustrated in the form of 'splendid youths' with unfurled wings behind their shoulders, to 'express the swift execution by them of divine commands'. The cherubim must be represented with a single head that is 'supported' by two wings, while the seraphim must be shown 'with one face amid four or six wings'.[106] The prescriptions for representing saints are particularly interesting: 'Saints or blessed people are to be in the form of youths and maidens, garbed in white or red garments, and represented with palm branches in their hands. On their faces holiness, wisdom, innocence and meekness are revealed'. Amid the 'virtues, vices and passions', personifications of concepts linked with Christian piety and morality attract the attention. It is here that the reader would find a description of Fortuna, one of the major Renaissance concepts, and also the allegory of Christian Faith, which was shown in the form of a tablet, the Gospels, a cross or a chalice, all surrounded by a shining light. Faith was thus

represented in the image of 'a seated woman, holding a cross in her hand, on her knees a New Testament; on her right side two Genii hold the tablets, while on the left there is one Angel with a cup'.[107]

Adornment of a religious image with emblems had the purpose of broadening its semantic space. It is no accident that the poetics of the emblem were inspired by the rhetorical theory of 'ingenuity' (acumen) and referred to a mixed genre of art in which word and image were inextricably linked. For this reason Alciati himself defined mastery of the emblem as *tacitis scribere,* that is 'writing silently', while Barthélemy Aneau called his 1552 book *Picta Poesis* ('pictured poetry').[108] 'By emblem in the true sense of the word', Emanuele Tesauro explained:

> the humanists of our day mean a commonly comprehensible sign, consisting of words and pictures, expressing something that relates to human life. For that reason emblematic representations appear in paintings; they are also exhibited in halls, luxurious apartments and in academies, or else they are printed in books with explanations for the enlightenment of the people.[109]

In connection with this we should again bear in mind one peculiarity of the construction of the emblem. It is quite correct to regard word and depiction as having equal rights within it.[110] Nevertheless, in the context of the interaction of frame and image the words of an emblem can be fully understood as commentary upon the depiction, and conversely the picture as illustration to the words. Thus the classic emblem, which always expressed some general concept or idea (God, wisdom, faith, time, etc.), was initiated by a short phrase, usually in Latin, which was called the *inscriptio* (or sometimes the *titulus*, *motto* or *lemna*). This represented the 'signature' of the emblem. Below it the illustration (picture) was located. Beneath the illustration there was placed the text that explained the drawing – *subscription*, that is, 'device'. This kind of structure demonstrates that the picture is contained within a textual frame, constituted by the 'signature' and 'device' of the emblem. The textual frame emerged as the semiotic frame of the representation. Where the picture made a greater appeal to feeling, its textual frame appealed rather to the intellect. As a result, the textual framing and the picture contained within it turned out to be indissolubly connected in the creation of a 'mental image': the one could not exist without the other.

This symbolic construction of the emblem might change, but the main thing is that it exercised a vast influence on the visual culture of the Baroque. Entering Russia in the middle of the seventeenth century, in the following century the emblem was to become one of the chief models for the formation of visual cultural stereotypes, while various techniques of its sectional framing became an effective device for the symbolic linkage of text with representation, hence for the elucidation of the object in the spectator's comprehension. As Mario Praz observed, the emblem was a mighty weapon in the hands of the Jesuit order, since it helped to conquer human minds. Thanks to this the picture turned into a full-scale hallucination, since it attached feelings to reason.[111] We might add that it also assisted the spectator to step across the frame of representation and to find him or herself within it. We have already touched on the question of the appearance of a new

composition in the Baroque icon, based upon the construction of an emblem. As also in the emblem, the depiction of a Christian hero from the middle of the seventeenth century began to be placed between the title of the icon and the display of a text that explained everything (that is, through the metamorphosis of a 'device' that changed into the troparion, kontakion and so on).[112] Representations on the theme of parables in the Shumayev iconostasis were a widely disseminated reflection of just this phenomenon. Now is the moment to examine more closely the role of the cartouche in this structure.

The word 'cartouche' (from French) means a small decorative frame in the form of a partially opened scroll, which since the Renaissance could serve as the symbolic equivalent of a book.[113] When framing a picture, the cartouche acted as a special signal as to how it should be understood: it indicated its unbroken connection with the written word. From the second half of the seventeenth century the cartouche became one of the most widely used framing devices for giving the name of an icon and various inscriptions on it, and often too of the representation itself, since it introduced new meanings (as compared with the Middle Ages) into the link between text and image. The form of the scroll bore witness also to the fact that the frame of the text and representation had begun to orientate itself towards the comparison of symbols. On this level the cartouche had from the first been directed towards broadening the context, 'enveloping' the symbol with a torrent of meanings. It drew heightened attention to the symbol by its 'strangeness'.

On Byzantine and early Russian icons the inscriptions had no special frame. The title of the icon was put on the margins or next to the representation of the saint, above or beside it. Indeed, the name of Christ or a saint could be split into two halves by the figure itself – it was as if it were fused together with the image, in response to the urge of the medieval symbol to coincide with its meaning. Thus was achieved the symbolic unity of frame, inscription and representation itself. By contrast, on the new Russian icons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries labellings and inscriptions are given every kind of miniature framing that Western Latin rhetoric could specify. It is no coincidence that it was at this time that monogram-style frames make their appearance in Russian culture; their basis is a metaphor that includes the picture in the interplay of comparison and commentary. Such, for example, is a representation of the abbreviated name of Christ formed out of the Instruments of the Passion – tongs, lances, pillar and 30 pieces of silver – in a book by Ioannikiy Galyatovsky, *The Souls of Those Departed* (Chernigov, 1687). As specialist research has shown, Russian culture of the seventeenth century chiefly adopted that strain of Western Latin rhetoric orientated towards the theory of 'moderate metaphors' – of course, not excluding the development of the Baroque tradition (*ornamentum*) too. It is simply that this position determined the 'moderation' of the Russian Baroque, which as a rule did not admit the same metaphorism of the frame into the Russian icon that we find in Western art.

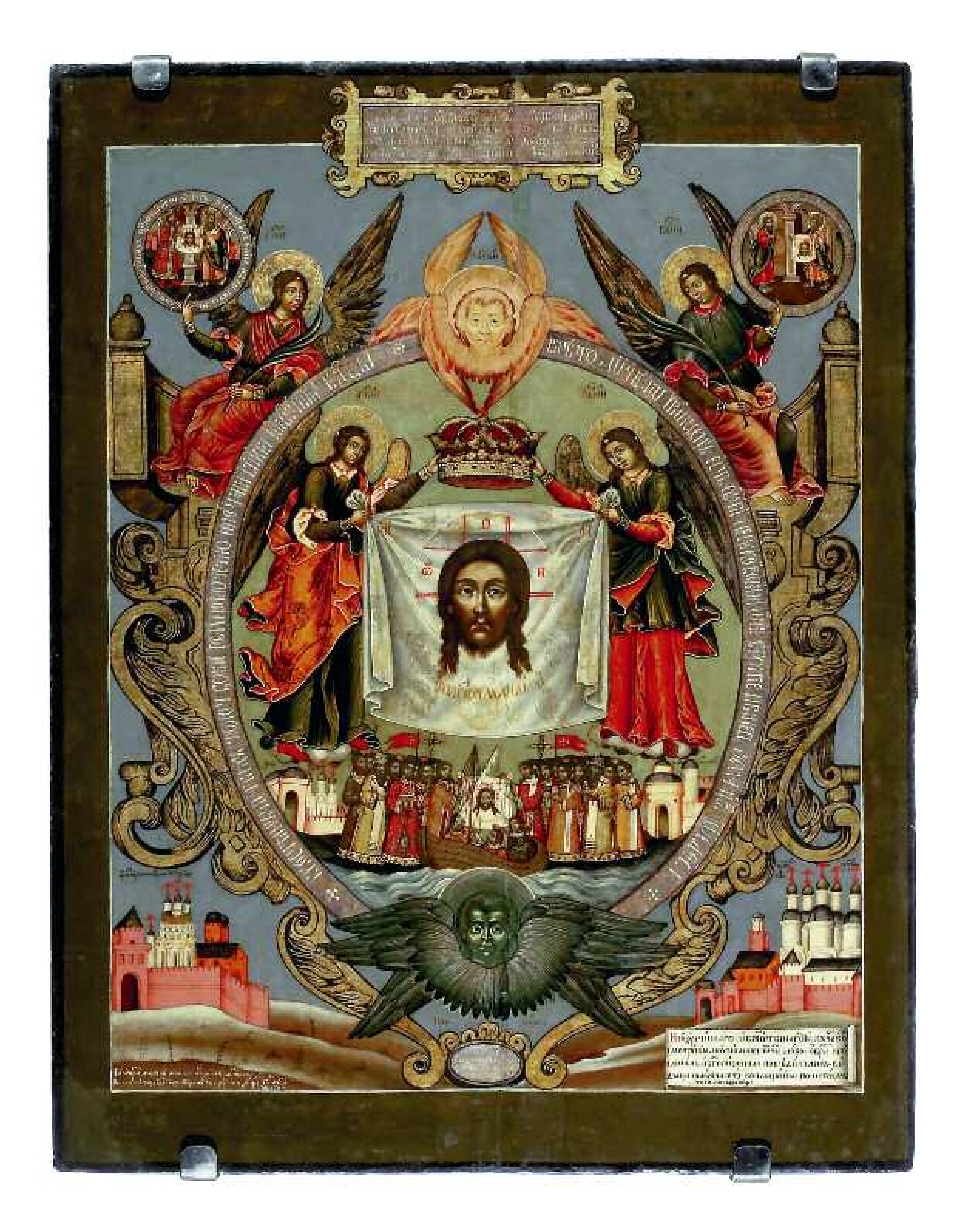
In a certain sense this was reinforced by the cartouche. Unlike, say, that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, its form was fairly 'neutral', and always subject to change. For that reason in the form of the cartouche frame, as in no other, the Baroque

tradition in Russian culture was able to manifest itself. With some reservations one can even say that the cartouche took upon itself the ideological function of reinventing the older structures. For a certain length of time it became the indicator of changes, even of a new orientation in official and popular culture. Cartouches first appear in icons by the craftsmen of the Armoury Chamber, under the influence of Western European engravings. Cartouche frames then spring up almost simultaneously on iconostases, their surrounds and casings, portraits, architecture and printed texts, in the popular print and even as part of the decorative milieu of the Baroque didactic theatre. Thus in the church of the Pokrov at Fili, near Moscow, cartouche frames adorned not only the iconostasis, but also the casing surrounds, for example of the icon of *SS Andrian and Nataliya* (illus. 51). From then on, throughout the eighteenth century and even into the first half of the nineteenth, cartouche frames were a widespread phenomenon, responding to the particular characteristics of the Russian Baroque and to the Western European influence on Russian culture.

Framing both text and picture, the cartouche acted as a signal to pay particular attention to what was within it. In this connection it could occupy the central position in an image for prayer, for example in the composition of the icon of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, with associated legends (1706; Tretyakov Gallery,



51 *SS Andrian and Nataliya*, late 17th century or early 18th. Church of the Pokrov at Fili. Rublyov Central Museum of Early Russian Culture and Art, Moscow.



52 *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, with associated legends, 1706. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.





Moscow), which is a typical rhetorical construction consisting of many frames (illus. 52). Thus the upper margin of the icon is 'interrupted' by a golden cartouche in the form of a half-opened scroll on which a text is placed, while a cartouche in the middle of the icon occupies practically all the central space. In the service of its rhetorical strategy, it seems to reveal and assimilate the golden throne on which the Lord Pantocrator is seated. This is suggested by certain elements of the throne (these too are figurative elements of the cartouche) – its back, semicircular on top, and also two seated angels, holding laurel branches and looking glasses set with scenes from legends. Within the cartouche the spectator could see two more angels, holding in one hand the cloth with the image of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, and in the other a crown. Beneath them was located the earth, with the story of how the image 'not made by hands' arrived in Edessa. Hence the cartouche, with its elements of the imperial throne, turned out to be a key to the understanding of the real substitution of Christ's presence by his icon.

The cartouche also reflected a new aesthetic attitude towards the image, since it was subject to the teachings of rhetoric and acted as one of the chief devices of that 'curious adornment' that flooded into a huge number of Baroque icons in the eighteenth century. This link between the cartouche and the rhetoric of the frame was a direct reflection of the Western tradition, in which we find every kind of cartouche with figurative elements:

53 Federico Zuccaro, Cartouche, *c.* 1600, engraving.

54 An engraving from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* showing a cartouche illuminated by Diogenes.



55 Rocaille framing of an icon of *The Entry into Jerusalem*, mid-18th century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

the engravings, for example, in the edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* by Johann Hertel (1669–1700) entered the Russian cultural context together with other books on the same theme.[114] Essentially, Hertel realized Ripa's principal aim of putting visual analogies to abstract concepts at the disposal of artists and poets. Hertel illustrated Ripa's allegories with pictures contained within cartouche frames. A notable feature of these designs is that their address to the reader and the chapter headings were placed in cartouches set with figurative elements, so that the cartouche may look like a sort of half-opened scroll, or perhaps like a cave in a cliff, complete with figures, sprouting trees and vegetation (illus. 54). When they framed emblems, however, these cartouches became simplified, offering no more than a hint that their origin lay in the medieval symbolic concept of 'the world as a book'.

Cartouches containing allusions and figurative elements were a favourite theme of Mannerist and Baroque artists such as Federico Zuccaro and Jan Lutma the Younger, who were working just at the time when the cartouche became a universal framing construction and could be met with everywhere (illus. 53). Indeed, entire sets of ornamental engravings with illustrations of cartouches, such as one inscribed 'Many new cartouches, drawn by Jan Lutma the Younger in Amsterdam, 1653', made their appearance and inspired a specific area of creative fantasy.[115]

The frame as a decorative motif here turned into an independent aesthetic problem for many artists and engravers, jewellers and architects, who sometimes did not so much focus on the practical requirements of their craft as seek means to express specific ideas. Unusually interesting and complex cartouches carrying motifs from the organic world



56 Rocaille detail of the cover of the icon *The Tikhvin Mother of God*, mid-18th century.



57 Looking-glass in frame, mid-18th century. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

and from astonishing realms of fantasy began to appear. In this connection one may also recall the part that the concept of the 'monad' played in the natural philosophical picture of the world during the seventeenth century. According to Leibniz, who was familiar with the semantics of the originating primal foundation of the world, the monad was the fluid multiplicity of potential states deriving from an amorphous origin. Consequently, the Baroque monad could identify itself not only with that 'dark room' (whether a crypt, sacristy, cell or the like) about which Deleuze writes, but also with the cartouche, in which the 'principle of enclosure' is no less clearly apparent.[116] The cartouche was the true 'fault line' of the Baroque, the fundamental frame and one of the chief 'nerves' of Baroque art, at the basis of which lay a comprehension of the world as a metaphor that opened up ever newer meanings. Thus in the framing of a cartouche the idea of absolute beauty could be apprehended. Thanks to that frame something splendid had come into the world, although it could well have arisen from something quite dissimilar. The Mannerists were convinced that the sublime could emerge from the hideous, form from chaos, and vice versa. So, when filling the void presented by the edge of the cartouche with fantastic beings, texts, vegetation or animals, the Mannerist or Baroque artists transformed its frame into a vehicle for apprehending the world around them.

It was by this route, as it happens, that in the second quarter of the eighteenth century the scroll-type cartouche transformed itself into rocaille. The root of this French word is *roc* ('rock' or 'cliff' in English). In the seventeenth century gardens, fountains and grottos were decorated with pieces of stone, seashells or marine vegetation. At a late stage of the Baroque this caprice evidently gave the impulse for the emergence of a new kind of cartouche frame in the artistic system of the rococo. Rocaille could represent either a cartouche of irregular form, surrounded by asymmetrical offshoots, or it could take on the character of a volute, or be filled with flowers and architectural detail in profile (illus. 55). This multitude of opportunities to create 'rumpled' effects lies at the basis of framing both heavenly and earthly beauty. On the casing of one icon from the time of the Empress Elizabeth the abbreviated name of the Mother of God is encased in rocaille (illus. 56). Leaves, shells, roses and a bird's wing are woven within its small frame. Roses could indeed be taken as a symbol of the Mother of God, but they are encountered in many other situations, for example in mirror surrounds (illus. 57). This once again demonstrates that here art served the interests of the Church in just the same way as it served the ideals of worldly beauty and luxury. In Russia during the second half of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth, the cartouche, connected as it was to the full force of symbol and metaphor, became the sign of Baroque aesthetics and rhetoric of a Western European type. This led to the final defeat of the symbolic significance of the frame of the medieval icon, as is emphasized by the complex poetic system of the Shumayev iconostasis. In the subsequent age of Russian Romanticism a movement back towards the country's Middle Ages and Renaissance would cause art to seek new forms with which to frame the divine essence.



58 Viktor Vasnetsov and Vasily Polenov, church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands, 1881–2, at Abramtsevo, with the chapel built later.

CHAPTER 2

From the Middle Ages to Romanticism

In this place of worship / a person passes through a forest of symbols, / they accompany him with affectionate / knowing glances.
Vyacheslav Ivanov[1]

Abramtsevo: Window into a Russian World

In 1881–2 a white limestone church, of a type unusual for its time and dedicated to the Saviour Not Made by Hands, was built at Abramtsevo, the estate of Savva Ivanovich Mamontov in the Moscow province (illus. 58). Its strange and unexpected collision of 'ancient' and 'modern' struck and astonished the viewer: the eye encountered a combination of medievalism and Romanticism, relating not only to the exterior architectural forms, but also to the interior of the church itself. At first sight it stirred a memory of Old Russian churches of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but at the same time there was something a little different about it. Its façade was clearly designed under the inspiration of Novgorod or Yaroslavl' architecture. The carved limestone portal reproduced fifteenth- and sixteenth-century forms and decoration, while the belfry above it, crowned with a little dome, clearly repeated the forms of a different building style, that of Novgorod and Pskov. The church created no impression of rearing upwards and floating in the air. The massive walls with their buttresses, the heavy dome and narrow windows, semicircular on top, were calculatedly impressive, creating a sense of 'fundamental antiquity'. Meanwhile, as important a feature of the church as the drum and the dome on top of it revealed the concepts of a recent master. The dome itself was encircled by a glazed tile frieze, characteristic of the period of Russian *stil' modern*, while the drum was intersected by elongated windows with a stepped profile at the top, not at all usual in ancient architecture.

But one's eye might be struck by an even more unexpected combination of ancient and modern elements in the forms of the chapel constructed ten years later over the grave of Andrey Mamontov. No such combination of forms had been encountered before, and an artist had clearly worked them out in response to modern creative impulses. The *zakomara* (gable end) and the *kokoshnik* (a pointed feature, fancifully suggesting a headdress, interrupting the roof line) were characteristic decorative elements of Old Russian building. The *zakomara* was always a semicircular or ogee-shaped top of a section of walling, flush with the internal rounded vault adjoining it, while the *kokoshnik* was a false gable end, the meaning of which was exclusively

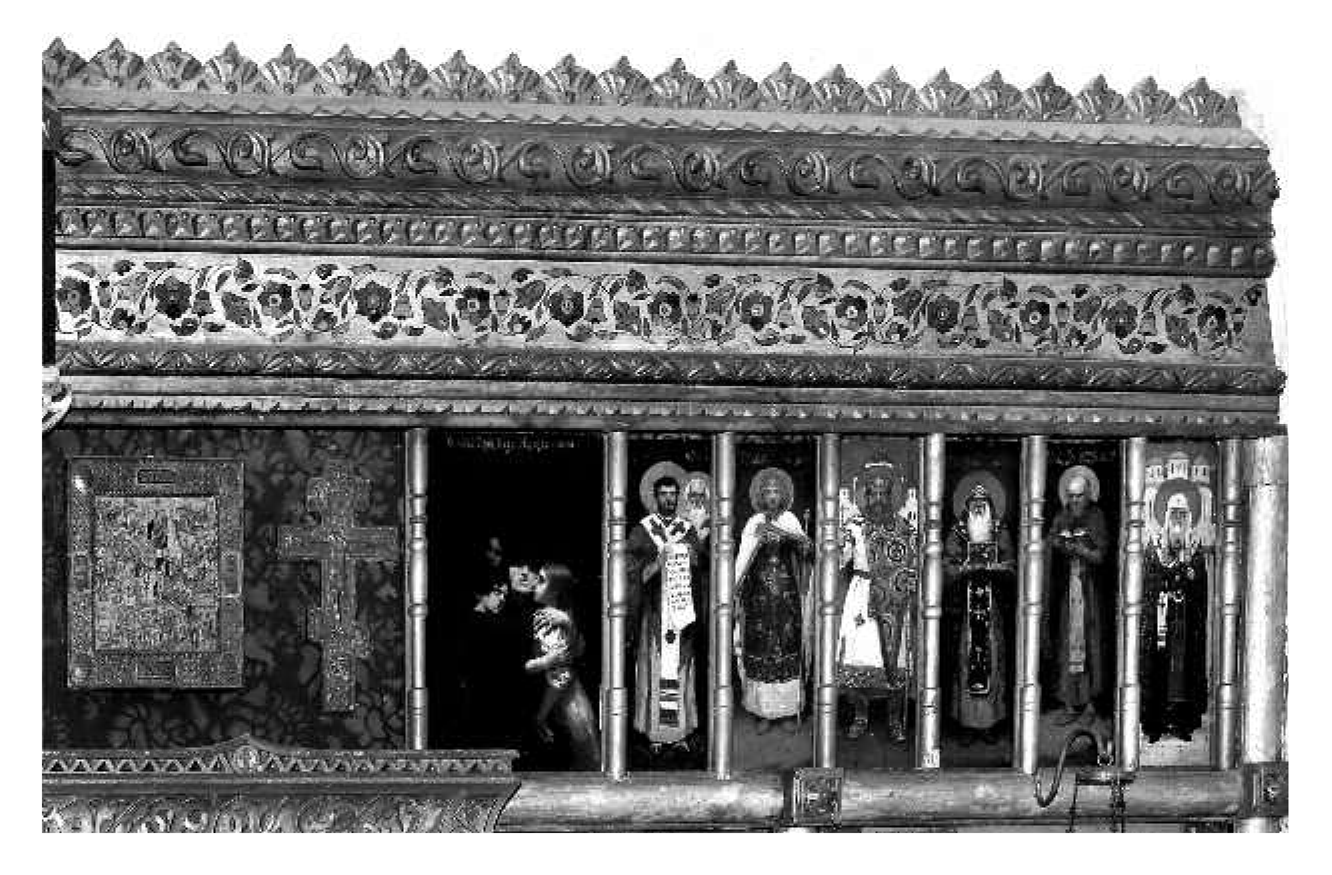
overleaf: 59 Interior of the church at Abramtsevo, built 1881–2; modern photograph.





decorative. The *zakomara* turned into a *kokoshnik* if it were separated from the wall by an uninterrupted cornice. Here, however, the architect employed these decorative elements quite differently. Two projecting walls of the chapel bore the burden of these altered forms. The front wall, used as the background for a grave marker cross in limestone, was crowned with a *kokoshnik*, while the side wall had the appearance of a *zakomara* and *kokoshnik* simultaneously, since the strip of tiled ornament running along the edge of the wall did not cut through it completely as it did in the first case. The placing of the windows topped with semicircles was also unusual. On the front wall of the chapel they were placed right inside the *kokoshnik*, while on the side wall three of them were symmetrically located, and one of the three seemed to join the upper and lower sections of the wall together. The chapel was crowned with an onion-shaped dome, an evident borrowing from a later architectural manner than the helmet-shaped dome over the main space of the church – most likely from Muscovite, Vladimir-Suzdal or Yaroslavl architecture.

All these external architectural forms corresponded to an interior that was just as unusual (illus. 59). It can be assessed both by the surviving decoration of the church, which is now part of the Abramtsevo museum complex, and by the old photographs located in the museum archive. On entering the church the visitor would immediately be face to face with the iconostasis, since the interior



60 Detail of the iconostasis at the church at Abramtsevo. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History ‘Abramtsevo’, Moscow province.

space was very small, designed for the family devotions of only a very few people. It was an early, two-tier iconostasis, whose architectural framing had undergone significant alterations. From ancient times this frame had served as a means for displaying the icons, which had represented a visual embodiment of the Heavenly Church. In this sense it was like a theatrical stage, on which the dramatic action of the heavenly life unrolled from age to age.

This concept also corresponded to the generally accepted distribution of the icons in rows, of which there might be two, three or even up to five or six. The first tier was always occupied by local icons, those that one should 'greet', whereas the second – icons of the Church feasts or Deisis – is a symbolic image of prayer and of the intercession of the apostles and saints before Christ, the Great Judge.

In this connection the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church caused some consternation: it lacked symmetry. For the process of apprehending it, this signified a violation of the normal logic of internal coherence that had been established long before, in the Middle Ages. To left and right of the 'royal doors' it was traditional to place icons of the *Mother of God* and of *Jesus Christ – the Saviour Not Made By Hands*, in honour of whom the church itself had been built. The icons manifestly embodied the Renaissance ideal of beauty, which unexpectedly conflicted with the medieval forms of its framing. This also affected other images for prayer. To the left of the *Mother of God* there was an icon of *St Nicholas the Wonder Worker*, and to the right of the *Saviour* there was a picture of *St Sergius of Radonezh*, with a bright ornamental frame, causing the quite large painterly image to resemble a miniature from a book.

But even more surprising and unfamiliar to the eye was the way the icons of the second tier were disposed (illus. 60). Its chief peculiarity was the total absence of symmetry and the bringing together of images that were different in period, style and theme. Here there were icons of the Christian feasts, painted evidently by craftsmen from Mstyora or Palekh, and two nineteenth-century crucifixes, one carved from wood, the other of copper. Standing apart from these there were icons of the *Mother of God*, *The Joy of All Who Sorrow* and the *Resurrection of Christ* of the same period. Finally, the traditional row of apostles had been replaced by saints connected with Russian history. These included the enlighteners of the Slavs, SS Cyril and Methodius, the canonized Prince Vladimir who baptized Rus', his grandmother Princess Olga, who converted to Christianity and was known as 'Equal of the Apostles', the Metropolitan of Moscow Aleksiy, the legendary first Russian icon painter Alimpiy, and also Nestor, the early twelfth-century chronicler. To these images was added an icon of *Faith, Hope, Charity and their Mother Holy Wisdom* (Sophia).

The unusual composition of the second tier of the iconostasis was further complicated by the unfamiliar location of the icons. Closest to the edges, to left and right of the 'royal doors', there were groups of icons of the feasts and saints, separated from one another by small columns, while closer to the middle, on a background of dark blue brocade with gold flowers, were placed the two crucifixes and (in random order) the *Mother of God of Kazan*, that of *The Joy of All Who Sorrow*, and the *Resurrection of Christ*. In other words, there were gathered into a single space images so disparate in style, period and content that one's

attention could not fail to be arrested. It was only the architectural frame of the iconostasis itself, the form through which all these images were displayed, that made them coexist and gave them a sort of specially defined order of their own; and it was just this other order that demanded a more attentive scrutiny. An inexperienced and naive eye could notice only an intentional arbitrariness; but a more attentive one could discern an independent logic in it all. The architectural frame of the iconostasis really did seem to dispute with the theatrical stage on which this new conception of heavenly personages and real-life people was being played out. And it was precisely the linking role of the frame that gave such an understanding particular depth, unexpected rhetorical constructions and new meanings within the whole complex semantic network that united the conventionalized space of the church and the real space of the world.

The iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church is both the 'border of paradise' and also a 'window into the world of Russia' – of Holy Rus'. The architectural details of its construction, its ornaments, the pictorial images and their distribution – all were there to convince the spectator that the altar space and the space of Holy Rus' were almost one and the same. This rhetorical standpoint was clarified and became quite clearly recognizable when the iconostasis was calmly and consistently examined. Thus the figures of apostles in the second tier were changed, as we noted, to figures of saints connected with Russian national history and art. The choice of them explains much. All of them were not only intercessors but also enlighteners of Rus', bearers of the idea of a national Russian culture. In a medieval iconostasis the figures of the apostles are represented turning towards the centre, to Jesus



61 Viktor Vasnetsov, *The Metropolitan Aleksiy*, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

Christ, which symbolizes their interceding and praying for the human race before the Great Judge. In the Abramtsevo iconostasis those who pray for the human race are the Russian saints, whose images are distinguished by their narrative content. Their figures are shown frontally, and their gaze is directed straight at the viewer (illus. 61). In this way the economy of salvation becomes clear not only by way of the saints' intercession before Christ, but also by way of individual contact of the Russian national saints with the person performing an act of worship.

The same thing concerns other representations: the icons of the *Saviour* and the *Mother of God*, of the *Tsaritsa Alexandra* and *Prince Vsevolod* (over the 'royal doors'), of *St Sergius of Radonezh* and *St Nicholas the Wonder Worker* in the 'local' tier of the iconostasis. Like actors on a heavenly stage, they carried on a quiet conversation and simultaneously turned towards the viewer. Their figures 'swam forth' in front of one's gaze as if in an epic or folkloric mist, since where they resided was the paradise of Holy Rus', while they themselves were not only Christian, but also popular heroes, active in metaphysical time and space. The Russian cultural landscape, interiors and clothing localized their interplay within the national history and the topos of Holy Rus'.

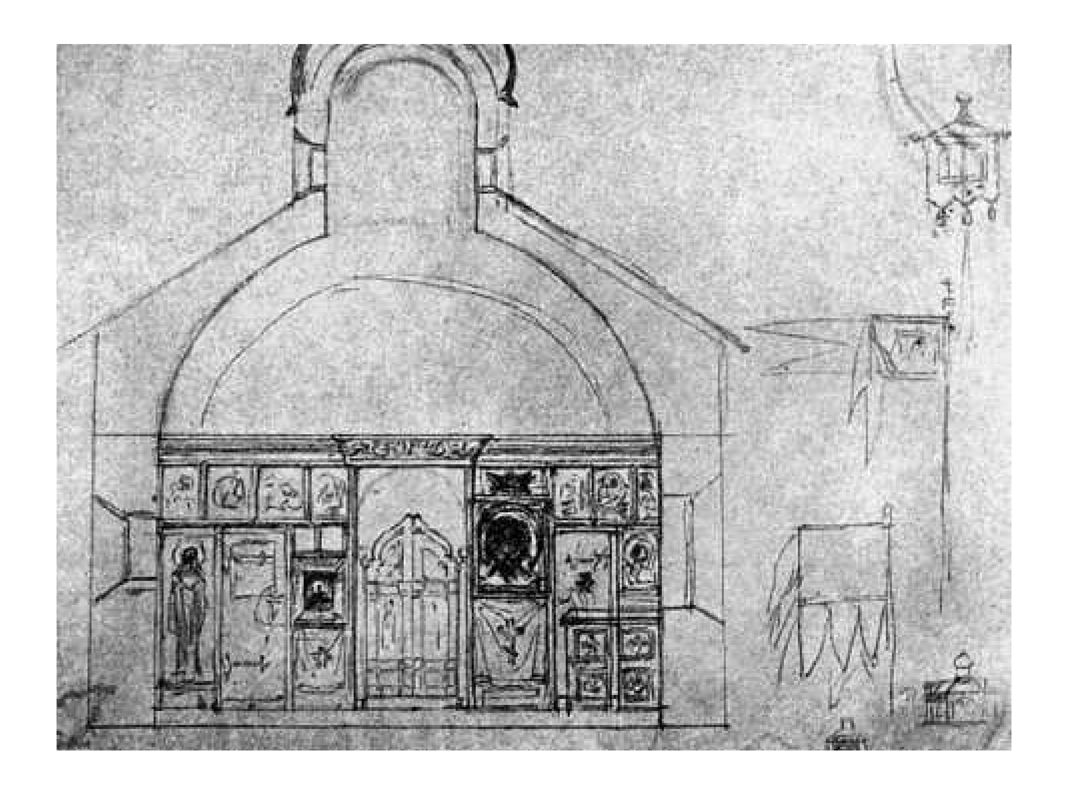
In this sense icons wrestled with theatre and literature, the last of which was at that time totally filled with epic and folkloric themes and plots deriving from Holy Rus'. The scene of the *Annunciation* on the individual gates of the 'royal doors' was executed in the manner of perspectival painting. The artist clearly wanted to transfer the central scene of the gospel story from Palestine to Russia. He represented the Archangel Gabriel in the guise of a young Russian lad, and the Virgin Mary in the form of a 'beautiful maiden', thus making them figures from Russian popular tales. The brightness of their colouring corresponded to the brightness of the Russian popular tale and mythology. The same was also true of the landscape and clothing of the Russian saints. The peaceful hermitage, the river and sunset probably become the chief components of the symbolic landscape of Holy Rus', which would be much explored in Russian painting of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, from the example of this icon. The architectural frame of iconostasis and icon casing responded to the same spirit. They aroused not only a certain mood, but also the idea of life as folk tale and myth, which could be set against the all-embracing civilization that alienated anything life-enhancing. Thus the national Russian cosmos appeared as indissolubly linked with grace-bestowing religious gifts and with the question of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the world.

The time has now come to solve the 'historical riddle' of our church and give the names of its creators. The Abramtsevo church was built according to plans by Viktor Vasnetsov and Vasil'y Polenov in 1881–2. A decade later the chapel above the grave of Andrey Mamontov was built, following Vasnetsov's design – as a result of which the space of the church as a setting for the Eucharist was amplified by a space for a memorial cult. However, as contemporaries recollected, the church as a whole was conceived in honour of the 'religion of the beautiful', as a memorial church to art, required to embody the particular novel type of spirituality of the modern period, in which traditional religiosity was united with the cult of art

and beauty.[2] Hence the Abramtsevo church stands before us as a unique 'museum of contemporary art', in which works of famous Russian artists were assembled.[3] The icon of the legendary Russian icon painter Alimpiy, painted by Polenov, was deliberately placed in the second tier of the Abramtsevo iconostasis: Alimpiy was understood to be the patron of artists, who bade them to propagate new ideals. For the same reason, perhaps, Alimpiy was also depicted by Vasnetsov in the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev. In brief, this was the church of a guild or fellowship of artists that arose in Abramtsevo rather like the Western European communities at Barbizon and Nancy, the Glasgow School of Art and the artists' colony in Darmstadt, the Vienna artists' studios (Wiener Werkstätte) and Talashkino, where the programme of the famous Arts and Crafts movement, which gripped Europe in the 1860s and '70s, was realized and called forth a veritable revolution in the realm of applied art. Its ideologist, the English thinker John Ruskin, sought his ideals in the past, did battle for a new religious ethic and proclaimed the creative worth of handicraft. The organizer of the fellowship at Abramtsevo, by contrast, was Savva Mamontov, a major financier and Maecenas figure, who is rightly considered an outstanding personality in the history of Russian art. The Moscow Metropole Hotel, the first Russian private opera house in Moscow, the journal *World of Art*: these were just some of his initiatives. In the smaller world of his Abramtsevo fellowship, though, he managed to realize two tasks by bringing together young, educated and outstandingly talented individuals – artists, architects, historians, poets and writers – and then instilling in them a sense of common purpose. That is how a group of people with different fields of expertise, but gripped by new utopian ideas of universal harmony and beauty, came to work on the realization of the Abramtsevo church. Thus the very project for the church came out of a creative competition in which not only Vasnetsov and Polenov, but also the historian of Byzantine and Old Russian art A. V. Prakhov and the restorer and architect P. Samarin, took part.

Within this creative and intellectual atmosphere were conceived those new principles for the stylized adoption of works of Old Russian art that, as scholars have established, secured the birth of the 'Neo-Russian' style in the culture of Russian modernism.[4] We should nevertheless emphasize that in the context of our present theme there were born, on the one hand, a new concept of the church as museum, and on the other a new rhetoric of the Russian romantic icon as 'absolute work of art', to use Schelling's expression.

This rhetoric strove to make religious images not only accessible to broad strata of society, but also capable of leading to the 'Rebuilding of the World' preached by John Ruskin and his adherents all over Europe. William Morris, the founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, and William Dyce, Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and others of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who wished to unite art and ethics and visualized such a union in Italian painting before Raphael, participated in this more than anyone else. Art (being regarded as a form of religion) was capable of transforming life: this was their common idea, one that found many adherents in Russia, particularly Mamontov, who was convinced that art was destined to play a major role in the re-education of the Russian people.[5] Hence the artists of the Abramtsevo circle entered Russian culture as direct



followers of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. Polenov used as the basis for his project at Abramtsevo the ancient twelfth-century church of the Saviour on Nereditsa Hill near Novgorod; Vasnetsov too reconfigured its architectural details. In their enthusiasm for the art of Novgorod and Pskov between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, the Russian artists drew upon the unity of art, craft and spirituality that had been such a revelation to their Western colleagues in the Gothic and Byzantine periods, especially Edward Burne-Jones, who assiduously visited the Gothic cathedrals of northern France in the 1870s.[6] In medieval art they attempted to discover the impulse for the transformation of life. Ancient architectural forms, calligraphic complexities adorning old books, folk carving in wood, patterns of popular embroidery that were receding into history, the brilliant decorations on ecclesiastical vessels and objects of everyday use – all these became sources of inspiration in the creation of a new type of architecture, of painting and works of decorative applied art. This was emphasized not only by the exterior of the Abramtsevo church, but also by its interior, in whose construction Polenov played the chief role. Indeed, it was according to his plans that the iconostasis, the main conceptual centre of the entire interior, was created (illus. 62).

The artist chose for his model the seventeenth-century iconostasis from the church of St John the Divine on the River Ishna near Rostov the Great. This is clear both from the recollections of his contemporaries and from late nineteenth-century photographs. He himself made the drawings for the chief casings and ornaments. He also had the icons of the second tier painted in 1882 (*Cyril and*

62 Vasiliy Polenov, *Design for the Iconostasis of the Church at Abramtsevo*, 1881–2, drawing. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

Methodius, *Princess Olga*, *The Icon Painter Alimpiy*, *Nestor the Chronicler*) and also the icons on the 'royal doors': the *Annunciation* on the gates, the *Last Supper*, *Tsaritsa Alexandra* and *Prince Vsevolod*. He made the sketches for the mosaic floor in the manner of those in ancient Byzantine churches, as also for the painting of the choir gallery. Others who took part in the actual painting of the icons included Viktor Vasnetsov, Ilya Repin, Nikolay Nevrev and Yelena Polenova. Vasnetsov himself undertook the *Mother of God with Christ Child* to the left of the 'royal doors', *Sergius of Radonezh*, and also some of those in the second tier: *Prince Vladimir* and *Metropolitan Aleksiy*. The icon of *Nicholas the Wonder Worker* was made by Nevrev, and the *Saviour Not Made by Hands* by Repin. Finally, in 1882 the sculptor Antokolsky sent from Italy, as a gift, a relief of the head of *St John the Baptist* that was set into the wall.

One can only imagine what a brilliant effect services and prayers made in that temple to religion and art, within which gathered those able to feel the excitement of the beauty of ancient artistic forms and the meaning of national images, to see Holy Rus' before their inner eye. Evidently, too, they were equally united by their consciousness that what they were praying before was modern Russian icon painting.

Idea and Feeling

A frame always reaches our senses a moment before the image itself. For that reason, when a frame continually draws attention to itself owing to its luxuriance, fanciful quality or over-emphasized beauty, it does not merely remain on the periphery of our vision. Such a frame always strengthens the game of recognition, and actively includes itself in the process of perception. As it looks attentively at such an unusual iconostasis, one's eye might gradually but inescapably come to the conclusion that its framing has been granted the possibility of not only representing the 'heavenly', but also 'thought', 'idea', and more than that – a definite religious mood and aesthetic experience emphasized by the complex and unusual ornament, which includes, besides the traditional church symbolism, stylizations of fruit and of wild flowers. The architectural frame of the iconostasis clearly made images tangible by some special means.

All the questions concerning the icons in the Abramtsevo church turned on the Romantic ideal of beauty and the religious cult of art. Equally, around these same concepts there also revolved the problematics of icon frames, thanks to which (as they thought) images were saturated with a special transformational power. For that reason we have every reason to believe that the chief creators of the Abramtsevo church, Vasnetsov and Polenov, may justly be considered the originators of the 'modern Romantic icon', which at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth found its embodiment in a multitude of works of Russian modernism. This 'modern' Russian icon had not only to stimulate religious questing amid the educated segment of society, but also to inject an understanding of Russian 'high' art into the popular religious experience. Furthermore, the conception of such icons rested on a conviction of the special religious sense of beauty, and bore the clear imprint of the theurgical aesthetic attitude that declared beauty as being of absolute value.

As the highest embodiment of this ideal people often cited Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, which so



excited Dostoyevsky towards the end of his life and a reproduction of which hung prominently in his study in St Petersburg (illus. 63). Dostoyevsky also wrote the famous words 'Beauty can save the world', adopted by Vladimir Solovyov as the epigraph to his article 'Beauty and Nature', in which he set out the basic points of his aesthetic views and which had a strong influence on many artists, poets and thinkers in the 'Silver Age' of Russian culture. Beauty was understood by Solovyov as a palpable and transformative force, as 'an idea embodied', the absolute value of existence. Hence the aim of art was declared to be theurgy, that is an act of creativity whose purpose was to 'inspire our lives', and within them to embody perfected ideals of goodness, truth and beauty. As Solovyov wrote,

63 Raphael, *Sistine Madonna*, 1515–16. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

'Perfect art must as its ultimate task embody an absolute ideal not just in the imagination, but in actuality – it must inspire and transubstantiate our real lives. If one is told such a task goes beyond the limits of art, one should ask: who set these limits?'[7]

The Russian philosopher was reviving the Kantian idea of absolute beauty, but brought together the concepts of beauty and goodness. Kant, understanding beauty as disinterested pleasure, assumed that people enjoy a splendid picture (or object) without any particular goal, without experiencing any desire to possess it. A picture is a representative of beauty as a universal and absolute rule, independent of our judgement of it. And the frame merely underlines the fact that a splendid picture is organized in the best way for 'disinterested' enjoyment. In the same way, too, the decoration of a frame is an example of a 'splendid object' and of 'beauty in freedom', which people contemplate without experiencing the desire to attribute particular meanings to it. After all, flowers are splendid for their own sake: they objectively embody beauty irrespective of what we say about them. 'Thus drawings *à la grecque*', according to Kant, 'an ornament of leaves carved onto a picture frame, on wallpaper and so on, in themselves mean nothing, and they represent nothing – nothing that can be included under the definite concept of an object; they are *beauty in freedom*'.[8] The Russian aesthetic goes further, and adorns this idea of beauty in mystical tones, linking the contemplation of a picture or a flower with religious experience. Hence the aesthetic contemplation of a picture summons the world and the individual person to transfiguration, while the ornament of the frame is interpreted as 'practical power'.

In the culture of Romanticism this understanding of beauty led to the development of an idiosyncratic philosophy of the flower, assigning to the splendid organic forms of nature the function of a boundary zone linking heaven and earth. In living flowers and their stylized representations (particularly on the framework of an iconostasis, an individual image for prayer or a picture), Russian philosophers, poets and artists began to discern possibilities inherent in Renaissance natural philosophy, investing the symbol with real force. A frame with vegetative ornament including the stylization of a living flower becomes as it were a zone consisting of some weightless medium, joining two worlds together. And in this 'vegetative realm', for the first time, clarity of form and darkness of matter are inseparably welded into a single whole, since vegetation, as Solovyov thought, 'is the first true and living embodiment of the heavenly impulse on earth, the first real transfiguration of the earthly element'.[9] Some notable lines by the poet Fet are dedicated to the same blend of the heavenly and the earthly essences of flowers:

As though sensing their double life
And doubly enveloped by it –
They feel the earth as native to them
And strive towards heaven.[10]

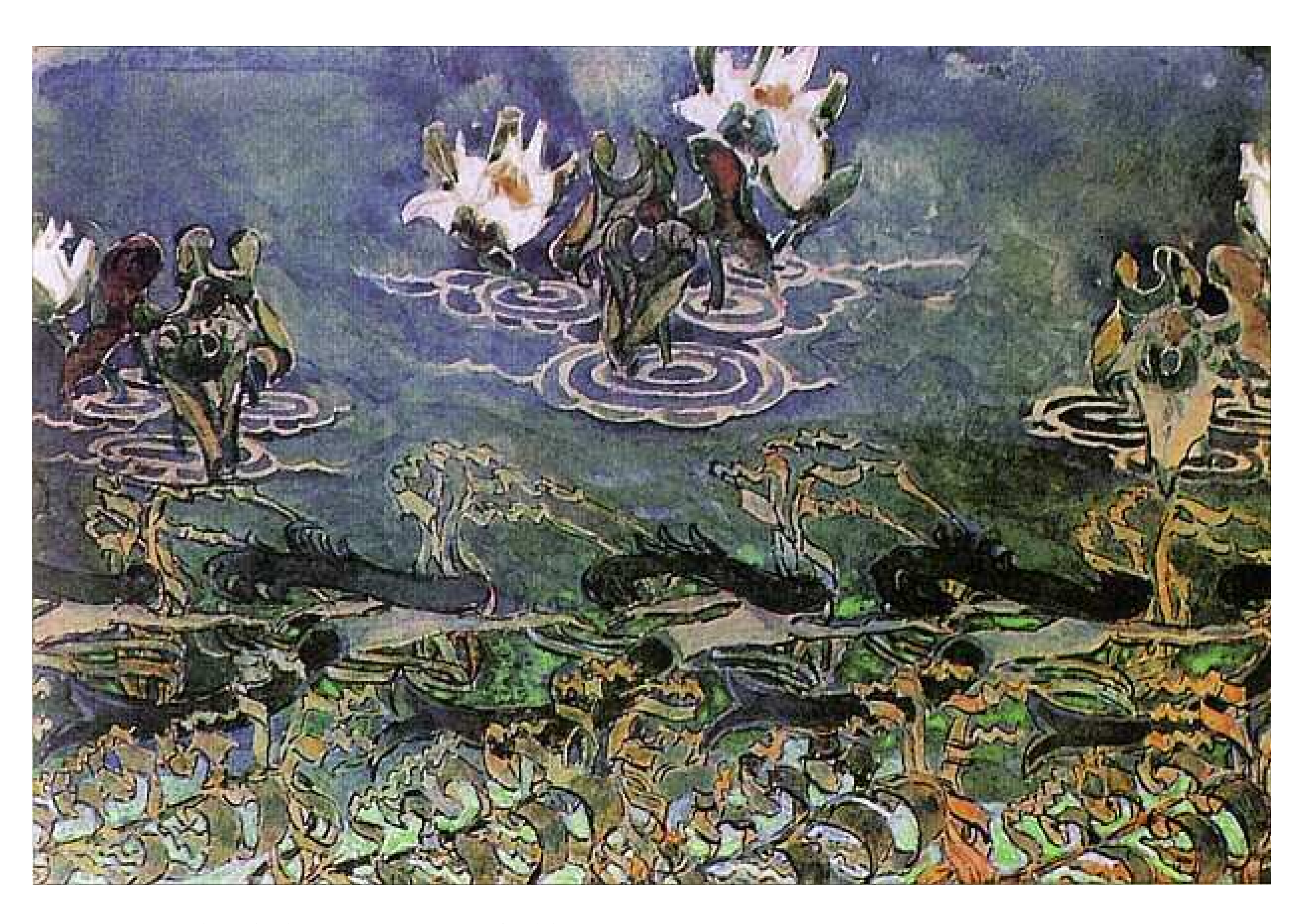
It seems as if nature has its hidden soul, and the artist through his or her poetic skill is called to give it value, to bring the hidden truth before God's daylight world. In the living flower is concealed the very secret of divine beauty, since its form is the jeweller's work of nature, in which the artist too participates, making a stylization of the flower and changing its form in the process of mystical penetration into the secret spheres of nature. The beauty of a living flower transforms itself (according to Solovyov's philosophy, and also to the artistic practice of members of the Abramtsevo circle) into a way of emphasizing the life-building power of art. But in so far as beauty, for the Symbolist or Romantic artist, was always revealed through feeling, the creators of the Abramtsevo church relied in the first place on an emotional and aesthetic-religious contact between the work of art and the viewer.

In setting about this task, the Abramtsevo artists moved the problem of ornament and frame to the foreground, as witnessed by the numerous sketches they made from living plants; such motifs were often turned into ornament, on every kind of framing, that is astonishing in its beauty and sensitivity (illus. 64, 65, 66). It seemed here as if Nature herself, the very landscape around the famous Abramtsevo estate, was idealized and spiritualized in contact with the sacred sphere of the icon, undergoing a transformation in the zone of contact between the earthly and heavenly cosmos. And in this the Abramtsevo artists differed in principle from the theoreticians and practitioners of the so-called Russian style in art and architecture, such as Fyodor Solntsev, Lev Dal', Viktor Butovsky, Vladimir Stasov, Konstantin Ton, Georg'y Filimonov, Fyodor Buslayev and many others, who regarded ornamental forms as mere elements of the Byzantine-Slav tradition, and whose purpose was to emphasize the striving of Russian society for national renewal. Within ornament they found only general laws of development of national art, and saw in it too a combination of art and scholarship, since they began taking such motifs directly out of the realm of archaeology, which at the time



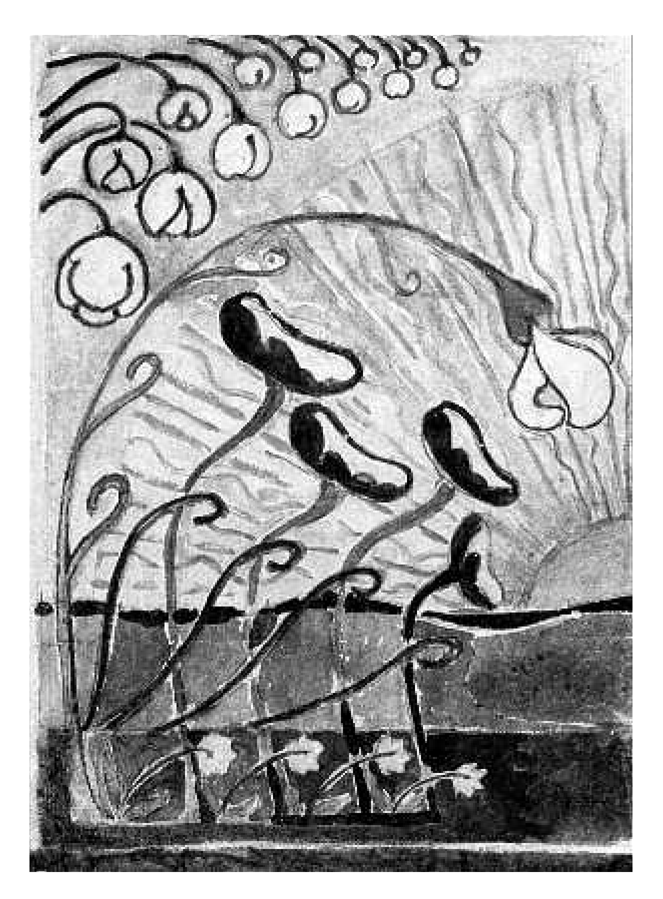
64 Viktor Vasnetsov, *St Sergius of Radonezh*, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

Botanical decoration on the frame of Vasnetsov's *St Sergius.*



was concerned with the investigation of Old Russian manuscripts and relics of popular creativity. That was why the study and publication of examples of ornament also famously became the first priority in the task of developing historicizing styles in Russian architecture and artistic manufacture. 'Our contemporary Russian style', according to Vladimir Dal' in the pages of *Zodchiy* ('The Builder', 1876), 'borrows its motifs not from the fundamental forms in which the ancient building was set out . . . but limits itself to the reproduction and reworking of ornamentation of Russian origin.' Then he adds: 'In its hunt for originality our modern art hungrily seizes on every motif used for ornamentation, which it seeks out in antiquity or among the people, and by degrees it fashions from this a new Russian style.'[11] Basic reference works began to come out one after another, aiming to define and make sense of the historic styles of Russian art, including *The History of Russian Ornament from the 11th to the 16th Centuries, from Ancient Manuscripts* (1870) by Viktor Butovsky, *Russian Popular Ornament* (1872) and *Slavonic and Eastern Ornament, from Ancient and Modern Manuscripts* (1884–7) by Vladimir Stasov, and *A Compendium of Byzantine and Old Russian Ornaments* (1887) by Grigoriy Gagarin.[12] These, however, were all sample albums promoting national forms of ornament, and made available to artists and craftsmen only those essential models of

65 Mikhail Vrubel, Decorative motif with flowering white water-lilies. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.



design that were to adorn an incalculable number of churches, iconostases, frames of icon cases and pictures, liturgical vessels, public buildings and everyday objects from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Viktor Butovsky, director of the artistic and industrial museum of the Stroganov Institute of Technical Draughtsmanship in Moscow, who was at the forefront in assembling and publishing Old Russian ornament, emphasized in the preface to his atlas: 'The aim of this publication is exclusively technical and industrial. It inclines in the direction of showing Russian masters and artists in the fields of manufacture and trade examples and sources of our individual style.'[13] From this, ornament was intended to penetrate into the everyday life of the humblest person and operate upon his or her national feeling and experiences.

Meanwhile, the artists of the Abramtsevo circle did not blindly copy all these ancient models, but used them as a basis to create new ornamental forms, aimed not so much at the development of national self-awareness, as at the creative understanding and religio-aesthetic activity of the romantic image, which had to aestheticize the milieu of one's existence. For that reason natural motifs were boldly introduced into the ornamentation of all sorts of products by the Abramtsevo workshop, such as icon cases, picture and photograph frames, furniture and household goods: stylized daisies, lilies of the valley, cornflowers, harebells, water lilies, irises, sunflowers, herbs and so on, which appeared together with mythological animals and the flowers of paradise. As a result, the ornament 'came to life', 'was idealized', acquired its own life force, and became the bearer of the mystical experience and complex emotions of the artist. Elements of such ornament could also receive a symbolic meaning. Orchids, lilies and water lilies indicated, for example, tragedy and death; harebells – longing; sunflowers – the sun and thirst for life. The same applied to representations of birds: the swan allegorically represented doom, for example, and the peacock a bird of paradise.[14] The peculiarity of the Abramtsevo artists' quest lay in the fact that they sought all these motifs simultaneously in Russian popular art. As Polenova, writing on this topic, put it:

> In our Russian ornament I have noticed one feature that I have not encountered among any other peoples: the use not only of geometrical

66 Yelena Polenova, *Lilies of the Valley*, ornamental sketch. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

> configurations, always somewhat dry, but also of more lively motifs, imbued with impressions of nature – that is, the stylization of plants and animals: for example the reworking of the leaf, the flower, the fish and the bird.[15]

Synthesis and stylization of motifs from folk art and nature in ornament affected the artistic experiments of Vasnetsov, Polenova, Mikhail Vrubel and a series of other artists who had a great influence on the formation of new methods of configuring ornament at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth. In religious art, particularly, ornament could acquire complicated symbolic and moral dimensions that were supported by not only the Russian theurgic aesthetic, but also the theoretical arguments of John Ruskin. The problem of ornament was perceived as *a religious problem*. Understanding art as a synthesis of beauty and Christian morality, Ruskin considered the 'true material' of ornament to be nature as created by God, that which 'is in agreement with the divine law' and 'is its symbol'. The very 'spirit of the people', its hidden ideas and feelings, were to be embodied in ornament, since art was called upon to serve the heightening of religious experiences and the improvement of morality.[16]

Hence, in large part thanks to the frame and to ornament, the modern Romantic icons of the Abramtsevo church were meant to achieve a particular power of emotional effect on the spectator. They were clearly reckoned to connect not with one's reason, but with one's mystical and religious-aesthetic experiences. In this connection Igor Grabar' noted that Vasnetsov was 'carried away' by the prospect of resurrecting the 'ancient ardent faith' when he created the Abramtsevo church; he 'dreamt of the resurrection of the spirit, and not just of mere primitive devices, he wished not for a new deception, rather for a new religious ecstasy, expressed through modern artistic means'.[17] This comment once again shows that Viktor Vasnetsov was a typical Symbolist artist of the period of *stil' modern*. He possessed the talents of an icon-maker and a 'high' artist, a book illustrator and a monumental painter, an architect and a theatre designer. In his work Byzantine mosaics and frescoes, architecture and folk tale, an interest in the Renaissance and in other currents of European painting all came together. Vasnetsov was also the first to turn to the sources of Russian popular creativity that had previously failed to attract artists' attention. Thus his icons with their hints of the folk epic and fairy tale clearly embodied the 'spirit of the time' and in their particular milieu were becoming 'bearers' of the new religious and aesthetic inclinations. As the writer Vasiliy Rozanov (1856–1919) put it, 'We can say about Nesterov and Vasnetsov that the two of them changed the character of "Russian Orthodox painting" when they introduced the strain of music, lyricism and personal impulse into its calm epic waters.'[18] Maybe unconsciously Vasnetsov also expressed his dissatisfaction with the epoch he was living through, and felt a mood gripping society that changes in the Church and the country were obligatory. In Russian philosophy such moods were expressed in a special attention to the doctrine of Sophia, the Wisdom of God, of the transfiguration of the flesh and in posing problems of new religious consciousness; while in the literature of the Symbolists it led to full-scale myth-making. For its part, Vasnetsov's modern icon not only embodied the Romantic ideal of beauty, but set itself a task that had colossal political significance.

In acting upon the perceptions of the community in general, it was meant to accomplish the liberation of the very 'spirit' of the Russian people. And at this point the rhetoric of Vasnetsov's painting found precise means for a swift entry into the mass consciousness.

In his pictures people discerned a true 'Orthodox Christian' philosophy; they were taken as icons representing the coming ecclesiastical and conciliar state of humanity. As one contemporary wrote:

> These paintings are a whole philosophy in themselves, and moreover a Christian philosophy. Striking us with the depth and integrity of this ideological content, they are significant precisely because of the severe restraint of their Orthodox Russo-Byzantine style, because of which it seems somehow awkward to call them pictures, rather than icons, and their appearance in the galleries of a museum, finely displayed as they may here be, seems somehow accidental: their place is in a church, and what is more a cathedral church . . .[19]

These icons by Vasnetsov bore upon them echoes of a cult of religious exclusivity. 'I seriously believe', said Vasnetsov, 'that it is precisely the Russian artist who is fated to discover the image of the Universal Christ.' He went on:

> Christ, of course, must unavoidably be personal, but the personal conception of him must rise up to the universal conception, that is, he must inescapably be imagined by the whole world in that and no other way, and a personal conception of an individual artist must in the end coincide with this universal conception.[20]

For these reasons Vasnetsov's icons exercised a great influence on Russian icon painting of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, which saw the appearance of vast numbers of run-of-the-mill imitations with characteristic 'Vasnetsovian' figures of saints, landscapes and ornaments, making the very icon come close to theatre and literature.[21] In other words, Vasnetsov's type of Romantic icon begins to do battle with surrounding reality using weaponry taken not from icon painters' pattern books (as existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), not from iconological compendia (characteristic of the Baroque), and not from the ancient classical heritage (as in the period of Classicism), but from the Romantic religious tradition, from its philosophy and from the national epics.

The notion of beauty as embodied in the Romantic icons of Vasnetsov resulted from his subjective aesthetic experience and was achieved as a result of the mystical contemplation of the national culture and natural world. That is why we find in them a characteristic landscape, national costumes, and a Russian historical environment that by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth would become characteristic markers in the religious images of Mikhail Nesterov as well as of other artists of the Russian *stil' modern*. One could sense in it too a clear influence of that new 'aesthetic devotion' that in the nineteenth century was linked with the cult of the 'divine' Raphael, and which regarded pictorial expressions of the Romantic genius as an interpretation of divine providence, the product of Christian thought. It was this devotion that attributed to art the power to penetrate the divine mysteries of nature, where religious truths were revealed and generated.

We should remind ourselves again that in the Middle Ages the icon was considered to be capable of transfiguring mankind thanks to its ontology of the divine, to the transcendental impulse that could be attained through the revelations of the Fathers of the Church. It did not permit invention, since truth and beauty existed inseparably within it, while its aesthetic side was valued only in so far as it brought a person closer to God. In Vasnetsov's Romantic icon we discover that its action upon a person is conditioned by the subjective aesthetic idea that was put into it by the artist himself. That is, if in the ancient icon truth in some sense engendered beauty, in the Romantic icon by contrast (as in the Baroque- and Classical-period icon), it is beauty that engenders truth, emerges as its synonym, and is the 'aesthetic revelation' of the artist's personality. That is why the Vasnetsov *Mother of God* from Abramtsevo (illus. 67) is so similar to Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, taken during the German Romantic period as an icon of beauty and symbol of the new aesthetic religion. According to Romantic legend, the Virgin appeared to Raphael in a dream, just as she had earlier appeared to saints.[22] It was not only in Germany, however, but also in the Russian Academy of Arts that Winckelmann's advice – that the works of Raphael should be imitated, together with works from antiquity – was followed. Winckelmann considered that the age of Raphael corresponded to that of Phidias in classical Greece.[23] In Raphael's paintings could be seen the very laws of classically perfected form. Russian artists too were aware of the legend of Raphael's dream.

Hence in Russian Romanticism Vasnetsov's *Mother of God* changed from being synonymous with the *Sistine Madonna*, and became the 'Russian Madonna', a modern Romantic icon, embodying the idea of absolute beauty that 'revealed' itself to the artist in the creative act. After the reproduction of this image in the altar scheme of the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev (1885–96), and its diffusion in a huge number of copies, Vasnetsov was called the 'Russian Raphael' and was seen as one of the prophets of the age.[24] In other words, 'revelation' in the creation of a new type of Russian icon belonged not to the saint, but to the artist – since the time, we should remember, of Simon Ushakov in the seventeenth century – who carries within himself a concept of ideal beauty, and strives to embody this concept in an artistic image. The Romantic icon as embodied beauty, people supposed, was capable of



67 Viktor Vasnetsov, *Mother of God and Christ Child*, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

transcending its own form and of causing the work of art to play a vigorously active role in the world.

As Erwin Panofsky has shown, in the Neoplatonic aesthetic system of the Renaissance the artistic idea had a metaphysical basis. As his divine gift, it had an a priori presence within the artist: it was his natural ability to carry within himself a notion of unsullied beauty, on the model of which he would 'improve' both nature and human nature through his art. But as early as 1664, in a lecture to the Accademia di San Luca at Rome by the art theorist Giovanni Pietro Bellori (published later as the introduction to his collection of artists' lives under the title 'The Idea of the Painter, the Sculptor and the Architect'), this concept has lost its metaphysical meaning. The artistic idea is understood as deriving from sensual contemplation.[25]

In German idealism the artistic idea became a fundamental concern of philosophy. If Kant, discussing the idea of the artistic imagination, tried to limit the interaction of the picture and the world to the category of the 'disinterested pleasure' obtained from one's encounter with it, by contrast Schelling and Hegel found in the artist's consciousness the constructive impulse that builds up and transforms surrounding reality. Considering reality as the outcome of human reason, they began to regard the artist too as the very type of the creative genius, creating his or her own world, one that has objective significance. This particularly concerned the 'philosophy of art' of Schelling, whom Berdyayev called 'to a considerable degree a Russian philosopher' in view of his influence on Russian thought in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth.[26] Schelling was responsible for the concept of the 'absolute work of art', which embodies both God and 'eternal beauty'. Born in the head of a genius, the work of art 'is possessed of reality'; 'it is in itself an emanation of the absolute'.[27]

Hence in the age of Russian Romanticism the role of art in the cognition of the surrounding world is raised, and there also appears an urge to create the 'absolute work of art', the 'icon of beauty'. Sometimes the image of the *Mother of God* by Vasnetsov, which first appeared in the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church, was taken as such an icon. So far as the frame of this picture (or icon) is concerned, in the context of these ideas it pointed unambiguously to the striving of art to influence the world. The frame became more and more subject to the will of the artist, to his or her effort to embody the idea of absolute beauty and to underline the capacity of the image to act upon surrounding reality. In the Romantic age the frame again took its place in the artistic project of the picture or icon, just as in the Renaissance or the Baroque period. The frame now demonstrated that art itself had acquired new limits and new horizons.

Thus in the Abramtsevo church the frames, covered with stylizations of living flowers, not only decorated the interior, but also took an active part in creating a special religious-aesthetic atmosphere in which the spiritual vision of the viewer would be opened up, and would also be sharpened, so they assumed, by exposure to the national religious experience. The special role of the frames was also conditioned by the fact that for Vasnetsov, Polenov, Nesterov, Repin and other artists of the Abramtsevo circle the very artistic system of the ancient cult image did not correspond to those 'rules of art' that derived from the period of the Italian Renaissance and following which they created their new icons. Therefore, so as to express the 'spirit' of national forms, transformed

motifs were borrowed from early architecture and ornaments.

This way of thinking led to a direct clash between the old and the new. This clash was, of course, noted on a theoretical level of modern culture, which was happy to connect medieval forms with contemporary elements. Equipped with these connections, the architectural solutions and the framings of the Abramtsevo church prompted thoughts about the beauty of Old Russian art, the depth of the national tradition, and finally about the exotic and the fantastical. These frames invited the viewer to sense the atmosphere of a romantic sanctuary, in which the foreground was occupied not by the historical and archaeological significance of medieval art works, but by their mystical-aesthetic reworking that would result in the revelation of their authentic beauty.

In this sense we have firm reason to assert that it was within the space of the frame, this artistic frontier zone, that a rethinking of the concept of beauty and its link with spirituality was to arise in the age of *stil' modern*. On the one hand it was here that this style accepted the fundamental axioms concerning beauty from Renaissance culture. We do not know the feelings that Vasnetsov experienced as he worked on his icons; but we can hardly doubt that his creative mind was saturated with deeply religious convictions of the transformative role of just that kind of beauty that derived from the period of the Italian Renaissance, as he himself suggested: 'Since for us the highest beauty is the beauty of the human image, and the greatest goodness is that of the human soul (the reflection of God), so too the reflection of the spirit in human guise must become the ideal of art.'[28] On the other hand, however, beauty in practice also approached that which the theoreticians of the period called 'national', 'ancient', 'popular' or 'spiritual', which also involved greater complexity in the domain of artistic rhetoric. In the future all this would be reflected in the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, in the church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, and in many other church buildings of that age in Russia.

Thus the individual frames of the Abramtsevo church bore witness to nothing less than the appearance of the modern Romantic icon and the modern Romantic attitude towards Old Russian art. They opened up the opportunity for imitation and stylization of works of medieval art as models for the generation of new forms and new subject matter. And just for that reason these frames are in some ways less paradoxical than might be imagined at first glance. To understand that we have to look a little further: we need the historical grounding that will let us see how the framing of a medieval cult image can gradually change into the framing of an icon as work of art. And whether it is an iconostasis, a casing frame, a wall and a window of a church, or just the space of a church used as a museum, each of these at a certain moment begins to answer to the free artistic embodiment of the idea of divine beauty. Between religious and secular art an active exchange of signs and discoveries is in progress.

The Boundary of Paradise

As has been seen, the frame of the Abramtsevo iconostasis inherited ancient forms that underwent metamorphosis under the influence of the culture of the age. But we have only to observe how this succession of changes takes place and how it unfolds in the historical perspective for it to

become more and more evident how active a role the frame plays in the process of displaying the image. The icon and its frame change over time, reflecting how not only religious feelings change, but also the aesthetic theories that evoke them. Of course, in the context of Christian thought the transubstantiation of the Holy Sacraments, the mystery of the Eucharist, is no figure of speech but reality. For the believer's consciousness the real transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ takes place in the Eucharist. The entire peculiarity of this way of thinking resides in the fact that in relation to the Eucharist the image, whether painterly (picture, icon), sculptural (statue) or architectural (church), finds itself in a subordinate position. In the Christian system of thought the image should essentially fulfil only a rhetorical, auxiliary and explanatory function; in other words, that of framing the act of the Eucharist, which is the unwavering condition for the human soul's acceptance into paradise. Because of this the chief elements of the sacred space of the church – the iconostasis, the 'royal doors', the wall and the window – were understood and constructed as an ark or altar frame, where transubstantiation of the sacraments took place.

For that reason the Christian place of worship was always arranged as if a simulacrum of the Tabernacle, since from ancient times theological and liturgical interpretations viewed it as the culmination of Old Testament prototypes. The church altar, for example, was likened to the Holy of Holies, and the ciborium above the altar to the Ark of the Covenant or to the New Jerusalem. From the most ancient period every one of the symbolic structures of a church designedly expressed a principle of duality that derived from the greatest opposition in Christian thinking: that between the holy and the most holy. Hence the altar table was regarded as the holiest 'frame' of the Eucharist, while the ciborium overhead was a holy frame, decorated with silver and gold, resembling the margins or case of an icon. The altar is Christ's footstool, the lowest step on the ladder into this world that the Saviour descends during the liturgy. But the altar could be regarded also as a step on a staircase leading in the opposite direction: participating in the sacraments, a person would choose a path that led straight to heaven. So the 'framing' of the Eucharist and altar always had a heightened significance in the rhetorical system of Christian culture. It was invariably linked with a person's conception of the salvation of his or her soul, and more broadly with ideas about the interrelations between God, the world and the human being.

A special place in the system of these concepts was consistently occupied by the iconostasis, that is the altar barrier as a symbolic 'frame' to the altar – the 'boundary of paradise', the line between the sacred space of the nave, where ordinary people could attend, and the most holy space beyond, in which the altar table was located. As with the framing of an icon, historical changes in the altar barrier were always connected with changes in how a person interacted with the divine, or more precisely with the individualization of religious feeling and the foregrounding of personal contact between the individual gaze and the icon, as is so clearly reflected in the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church. But how was this reflected? We should remember that the altar barrier of a Byzantine church, the templon, consisted of a parapet on small columns carrying an architrave (in Greek *epistylion*). It was a relatively

independent architectural structure, a metamorphosis of the form of the façade of an ancient building. It was this form that Polenov joined with the later Old Russian structure of the 'royal doors' (illus. 59). On top of circular columns, of the ancient type with capitals, he placed an architrave or epistylion, turning the latter into a supplementary 'frame' for the image of the Last Supper (we shall say more on this below). In early times only the icons of the Deisis stood on the architrave. (In Orthodox iconography, an image of Christ flanked by the Mother of God and John the Baptist, often with other holy figures, interceding for mankind.) This supporting structure, carrying the icons, served as no more than a symbolic 'framing', not differentiated from the representation itself, like the margins (or 'ark') of an icon. The same applied to the icons of the first, 'local', tier, which were there to be worshipped and were connected with the dedication of the church. In the past they had been placed on a small board in the gaps between the columns, which resulted in the appearance of a two-tier iconostasis that contained only two rows: that of the Deisis and of the local icons. This kind of ancient iconostasis was a distant relative of the structure of the iconostasis within the Abramtsevo church.

In Russian churches of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the ancient Byzantine epistylion was transformed into a simple squared support beam on which the icons of the Deisis tier were placed, while the icons of the local tier were fixed onto a lower board. In iconostases of this kind there was only one supporting member: it was fastened to the wall or the two eastern piers of the building. When, however, the tiers of prophets and forefathers were added to the first two, the number of icon rows and supports was correspondingly increased.[29] Thus at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a two-tier altar barrier in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin became a complete wall of icons – a collective image of the economy of salvation, the chief dogmatic idea of which was embodied in the iconography of the Deisis and of the 'royal doors'. But whereas the Byzantine altar barrier permitted believers to see into the altar space, the Russian iconostasis created a 'boundary of paradise' – the boundary between the sacred space of the nave and the super-sacred space of the altar – completely impenetrable to people's gaze. Like the severe and 'impenetrable' framing of a medieval icon, the high iconostasis totally closed off the space in which the altar table stood and the mystery of the Eucharist was enacted.

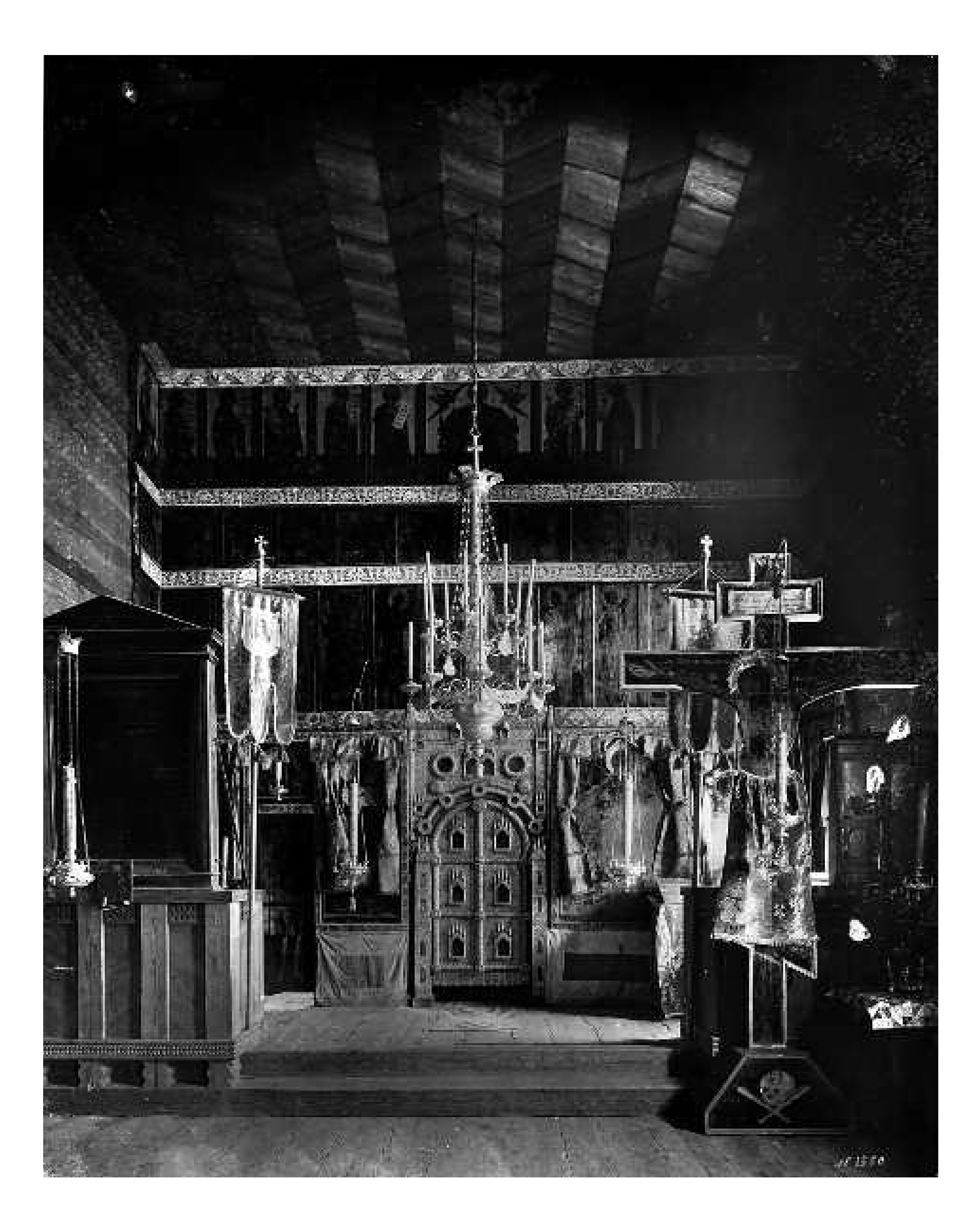
The icons stood in it butted up against each other, while the rows themselves were separated by supporting members. The peculiarity of this structure was that in itself, as the material framing of a painterly image, it was not specially marked out: what was important in the Middle Ages was the image of the end of history and the fulfilment of time in itself, calculated to look solemnly impressive, rather than the framing that might hint at the significance of feelings and of personal experiences. Meanwhile, it was from the development of this beamed structure in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the gradually growing complexity of the architectural-sculptural frame of the iconostasis as a whole also began. From the second half of the seventeenth century right up to the beginning of the twentieth, the number of icons in the high iconostasis was slowly reduced, while its architectural frame acquired a

massive quality and a dominating role in the organization of the interior. And all this happened thanks to the fact that under the influence of Western Latin rhetoric and the aesthetic theory of the Baroque, of Classicism and Romanticism, the form and function of the frame as instrument of commentary on the pictorial image were continually being reconfigured. The frame underwent changes that corresponded to changes in the concept of the sublime.

Thus in the medieval church neither the frescoes nor the iconostasis were subject to the parameters of a viewer's perception. A person could not make out either the top tier of the iconostasis or, still less, the inscriptions on wall paintings or icons. All this was 'seen' by God, which was considered much more important. From the second half of the seventeenth century the interior of a church, including the iconostasis, gradually began to respond to the peculiarities of human vision. This immediately increased the significance of the frame in the process of displaying an image: the frame directs the gaze towards the individual icon, inviting us to calm and prolonged contemplation; that is, it sets up contact between the individual viewer's gaze and the image. It also makes its comment on this 'encounter' through ornament and form. As a result there comes a definite historical moment when the icons on an iconostasis received individual frames.[30] Thus the icons in the beam-structured iconostasis of the church of St John the Divine on the River Ishna, for example, are intended not for contemplation, but for solemn and reverential presentation (illus. 68). By contrast, the icons of the Trinity Cathedral of the Ipat'yevsky Monastery in Kostroma (1652, 1757) are intended for a radically different type of scrutiny (illus. 69). They are set in a new, Baroque frame, dictating a rhetorical reordering of one's gaze. The latter reveals and puts in order a multitude of disparate images, linked into a single picture in the human consciousness.

Furthermore, the framing of the ideal beauty of paradise points for the first time towards an ancient model. The new frame on the iconostasis of the Trinity Cathedral is presented in the forms of the Renaissance architectural order system, using small columns, cornices and capitals typical of Renaissance tabernacles, through which there shines the Renaissance ideal of beauty that took the beauty of the classical world as its model. Demonstrating its full power over the perceiving consciousness, the frame evokes joyous emotions. The icons are apprehended simply and quickly. They indeed arouse a heartfelt excitement thanks to the abundant ornamental brilliance of the frame, which opens up imagination and fantasy to one's perception. In other words, the beamed framing of the medieval image of paradise is turned in such iconostases into the framing of individual icons as works of art. Henceforth, both the ornament and the form of the frame, and the artistic system of the icon itself, would be subject to clear-cut aesthetic theories.

This is clearly evident on the iconostasis of the Nativity ('Stroganov') Church in Nizhniy Novgorod (1697–1703, 1719), which is covered in so-called Flemish carving (illus. 70). This incorporates an unimaginable variety of vegetal motifs – bunches of grapes, acanthus leaves, pomegranates, exotic flowers and so on – while the icon of the *Mother of God* set into this frame is itself painted under the influence of Renaissance art. As specialist studies have demonstrated, all these decorative motifs were a reflection of the Western



European iconography of the *hortus conclusus* or Garden of Paradise. And it must be noted that they were all encountered not only on the framing of Western European religious and secular paintings and prints of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also even on everyday objects, such as furniture, crockery and textiles.[31] The ornament on a frame of the Baroque period reveals to us the close interactions between religious and secular culture. The Western European symbolism of vegetation is transferred into another milieu and acquires new subtleties, but

68 Church of St John the Divine on the River Ishna near Rostov the Great, 1685.



69 Iconostasis in the Trinity Cathedral of the Ipat'yevsky Monastery, Kostroma, 1652 and 1757.



70 Detail of the iconostasis in the Nativity ('Stroganov') Church, Nizhniy Novgorod, 1697–1703, 1719.



does not thereby cease to be active and effective in the space between the human being and the image. It simply acquires additional meanings, new interpretations; turns the gaze towards new situations. The flowers and herbs here enlarge the figurative concept of the iconostasis as a 'wall of paradise', while also expressing the general Renaissance-inspired world view of Russian culture.

During the reign of Empress Elizabeth (*reg* 1741–62) the addition of a myriad of scrolls, shells and flowers to the rocaille frames of iconostases supplied the 'innocuous' decoration that witnessed

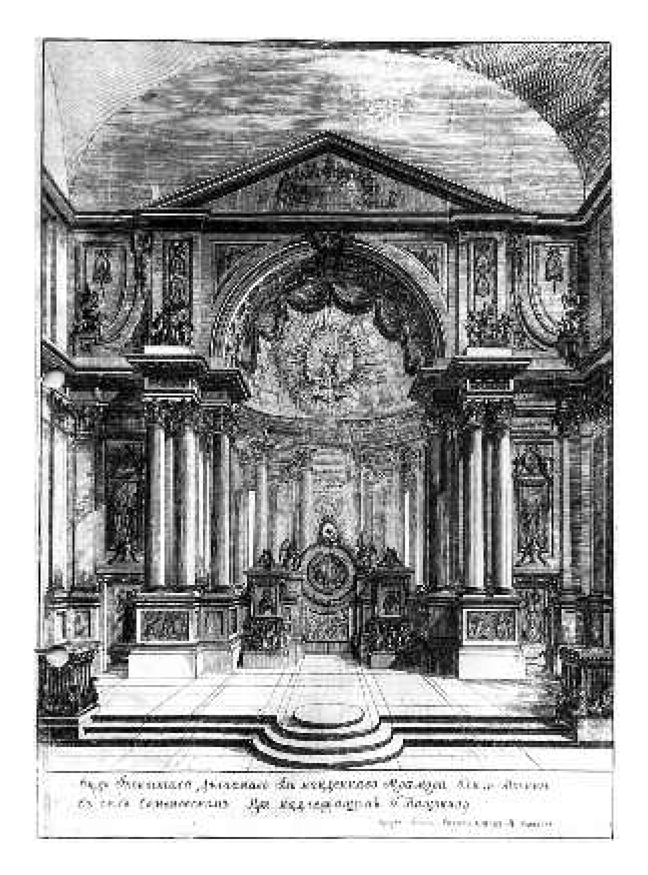
71 Palace Church of the Resurrection, Tsarskoye Selo, 1746–8, by Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli.

to the highest development of Baroque aesthetics and on the basis of which, as we have remarked, Immanuel Kant developed his theory of 'disinterested pleasure' from looking at a picture and its frame. Such are the iconostases by Rastrelli. By giving the imagination scope to soar, their decor helps us to understand how the ideal of beauty in the middle of the eighteenth century was contained not only in their reasoned usefulness, but also in their capacity to evoke feeling and pleasure. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a condition for the development of this decor was the Russian nobility's inclination to give itself over to the pleasures of life. Not only secular but also religious paintings in fine frames were vehicles for aesthetic enjoyment and the sheer pleasure of beholding them. Beauty and goodness, beauty and religious exhortations were brought as close as possible in their elegant and weightless decor. Just this sense of the beauty of heavenly and earthly life was evoked by the iconostasis of the Resurrection church in Tsarskoye Selo, created according to Rastrelli's plans in 1746–8 (illus. 71). Alexander Benua elucidated the richness of the framing structures of this magnificent church:

> The iconostasis, going right up to the ceiling, is adorned all over with images in luxuriant rocaille manner. At the top are placed the Apostles, shown at full height. Below them is a row of circular images of the Prophets, two in each. The frames of these images are connected with the frames of the lower tier, and together with them constitute one elegant whole.[32]

The frame of the iconostasis also initiates us into the mysteries of Wölfflin's formula concerning the 'disturbance' of the contours of a Baroque work of art.[33] Incidentally, Rastrelli's iconostases, sometimes echoing the façades of Baroque buildings, speak to us of the very special understanding of the correspondence of the inner and outer in the aesthetics of this time. Thus, like the façade of a building, the iconostasis of the St Andrew Cathedral in Kiev (1748–62), also by Rastrelli, strains towards expressiveness. It was in this sense that Deleuze, following Wölfflin, notes that 'the contrast between the excessive expressionism of the façade and the serene calm of the interior gives rise to one of the most powerful impressions that the art of the Baroque can produce on us'.[34]

If the Baroque strained to turn every form into decoration, Classicism by contrast attempted



72 Matvey Kazakov, Design for the iconostasis at the church in Semyonovskoye village, 1778.

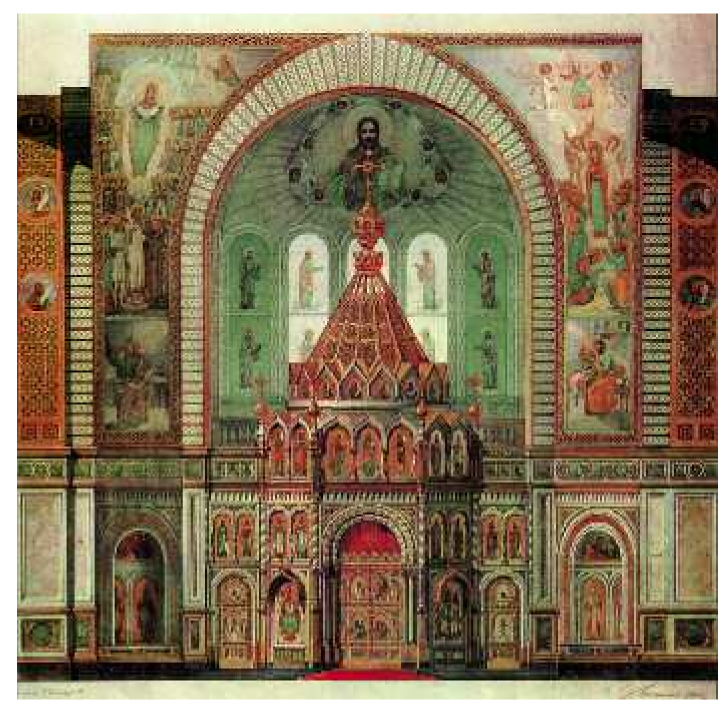
to give it loftiness and lucidity. The 'boundary of paradise' achieves in both architecture and Russian church painting of the last quarter of the eighteenth century the embodied ideal of beauty of the ancient world. We can convincingly see this in the iconostasis of the village church of Semyonovskoye, near Moscow, completed in 1778 by one of the founders of Russian Classicism, Matvey Kazakov (1738–1813) (illus. 72). In his hands the Russian iconostasis acquired the appearance of an antique façade, reminiscent of a Renaissance tabernacle of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It included a small barrier, comprising two icons of the local tier, that scarcely managed to close off the vast altar space, an open rotunda with rows of Corinthian columns. The representation of the *Resurrection* was located in this half-dome. This meant that, when viewing the iconostasis directly, one was not met by a solid wall of icons, but by an ancient type of sacred niche with an image beyond the altar, the significance of which in the perceptual process was emphasized by a half-opened curtain, and indeed by the whole complex formation of the façade, which was richly adorned with sculptural groups, bas-reliefs and pictures on medallions. Columns and pilasters demarcated the walls, which were crowned with a classical pediment containing the scene of the *Last Supper*, while the pictures on the wall were surrounded with carved or moulded frames. Thus we have before us a strict selection and reproduction of antique motifs that reflect a new understanding of art's role in conveying the truths of the Christian Church, and finding its embodiment not only in the classicism of Kazakov, but also in the work of Vasiliy Bazhenov, Andrey Voronikhin, Andreyan Zakharov, Ivan Starov and many other architects who in the age of Classicism designed both public and religious buildings while following the same set of canons.

'It had become difficult to distinguish between a church and a riding school or stock exchange, and the colonnade of the classical portico greeted you in such a way that going into a theatre was just like going into a church', noted Nikolay Tarabukin.[35] That was hardly accidental, since models of universal validity, such as the architectural order system and ornaments, became far more characteristic of Classicism than they had been in the Baroque. What Tarabukin considered a glaring contradiction was quite justifiably regarded as aesthetically 'regular' by contemporary culture.[36] For representatives of Classicism, clarity and contemplative quality were the criterion of 'good taste', which suggested to the artist the correct choice of artistic means by which the idea of absolute beauty should be embodied. Thus in the circumstances of the new aesthetic, the classically sublime art of the Greeks was interpreted as the most suitable for the symbolic and allegorical expression of Christian doctrine. One of the teachers in the St Petersburg Academy of Arts explained it thus: 'The Greeks had a most correct idea about the fine arts. They respected them as an appropriate means for the improvement of morals and for the confirmation of the rules of philosophy and the law.'[37]

Hence the Russian Orthodox icon of the age of Classicism followed classical proportions and attributes. The ornament on its frame, as also on an iconostasis, consisted of acanthus leaves, garlands, memorial urns half concealed by drapery and medallions suspended from ribbons. This was intended to determine the trajectory of one's gaze towards those canons of antique beauty through which the tasks of the Orthodox Church could be

realized, in a manner that was more appropriate to the grandeur of the Christian story, or so it was supposed, than the 'eccentric' fantasies and ornaments of the Baroque. Thus according to the rules of Classicism it was appropriate to borrow from the full range of antique sculptural form, decor or architectural detail, thus getting closer to a true representation of the earthly and heavenly life of Christ, the Mother of God and the saints. Furthermore, thanks to these rules it was possible to maintain order and persuasiveness in the artist's aesthetic imagination. For that reason the artist was not interested in the multifariously picturesque world that would later captivate the Romantics, but rather the internalized and ruling principles of the sublime in our existence – that is to say the laws of harmony that appear to lie beyond the visible and chaotic phenomena of the surrounding world. The route to achieving verisimilitude was found by following these laws, since it was their stability alone that could explain the orderliness and connectivity of the phenomena of nature. This accounted for the full meaning of the difference between the religious imagery of, say, Vasiliy Shebuyev or Vladimir Borovikovsky in the St Petersburg Kazan Cathedral (1811) on the one hand, and on the other the naturalistic Romantic painting of Fyodor Bronnikov, Yevgraf Sorokin or Vasiliy Vereshchagin in the church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow (1883). This too accounts for the difference between the plans for the iconostasis proposed by Matvey Kazakov and by the architect Konstantin Ton, whose aesthetic views were already close to those of the Romantic age. Ton and his supporters looked for perfect beauty not in the works of ancient art, but in the Russian nation's path towards independence and understanding of its history. Thus the demands of elegance gave way to demands for strength of feeling and religious exclusivity.

Such was the iconostasis and the ornamentation of the church of Christ the Saviour (illus. 73). The 'boundary of paradise' here takes the form of an Old Russian tent-shaped church, which brings a national and patriotic intonation into the resonant beauty of the religious image. In so far as one or another conception of art was called upon to serve the cult demands, the form of this frame unambiguously points to a reorientation of the political outlook of the Russian Church towards the theory of 'Moscow, the Third Rome'. During the period of Classicism people extracted a hint of the nobility and the harmonious spirituality of the religious image from statues of Greek gods and the ornament



73 Design for the iconostasis of the church of Christ the Saviour, Moscow, 1860s, architect Konstantin Ton.

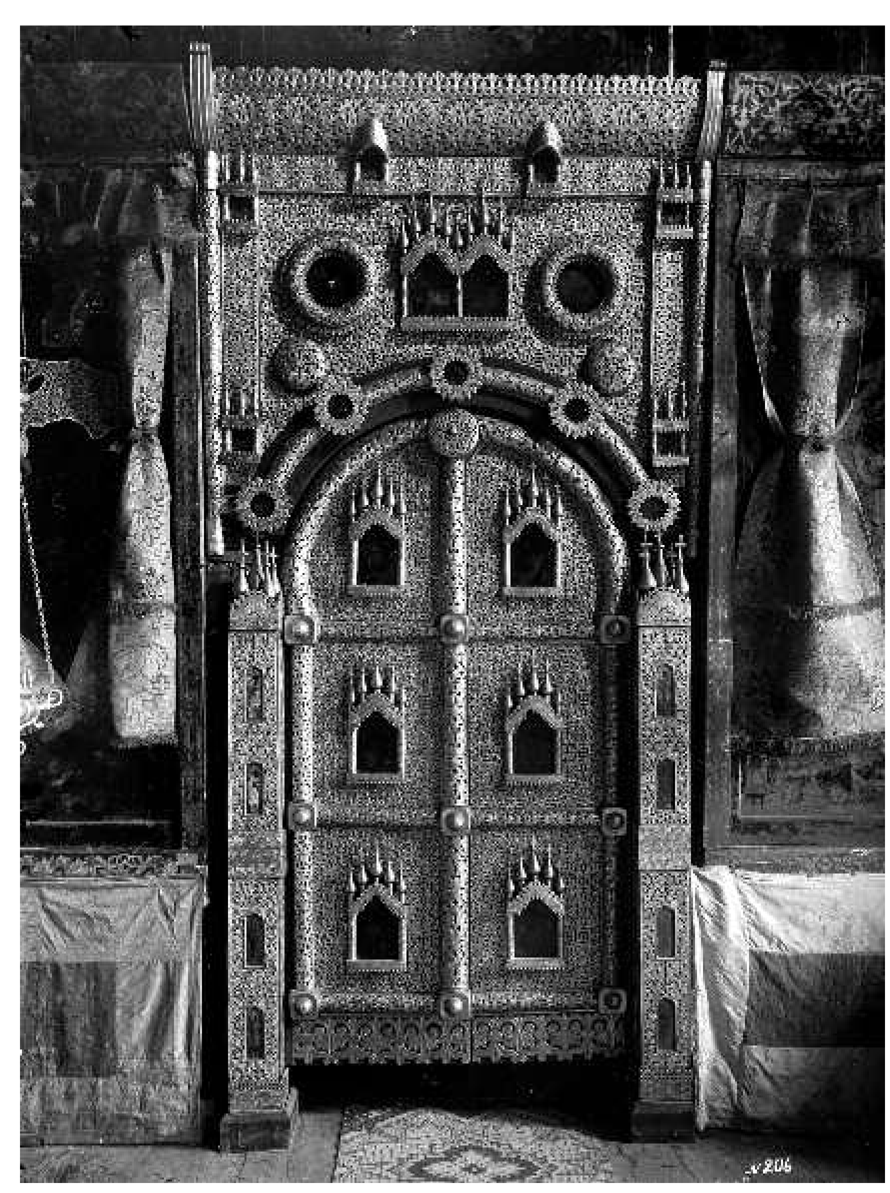
of Greek temples. In the frames and ornaments of the church of Christ the Saviour, as planned by so brilliant a representative of the 'Russian style' as Lev Dal', national independence and the official Church's inheritance from Byzantium and Muscovite Russia were specially emphasized. The power of Orthodox art was seen in the beauty of the national tradition. And here the 'Russian style' differed in principle from the aesthetics of those who designed the Abramtsevo church. The Abramtsevo artists gave priority to sincerity of feelings and experiences in their understanding of the beauty of frame and image. Finally we have to note that the 'Russian style' and *stil' modern* of the 1880s, by turning attention to the reconfiguration of the Byzantine and Old Russian heritage, assisted the emergence of the most varied types of altar barriers: from the neo-Byzantine templon (as, for example, in the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev) to the multi-tiered Old Russian iconostases in Old Believer churches built to designs by Vladimir Pokrovsky, Ilya Bondarenko, Aleksey Shchusev and other leading architects of Russian *stil' modern* at the beginning of the twentieth century. The selection of ancient forms of altar barrier in official places of worship in Moscow, St Petersburg and in the Orthodox East shows an awareness of the ecclesiastical and imperial might of the Russian empire inherited from the ancient empires of Rome and Constantinople.

Meanwhile, the 'boundary of paradise' acquires an even more interesting cultural historical sense if we look more closely at the 'royal doors' of the iconostasis, that is, the gateway to paradise. It is not by chance that in Old Russia these were called the 'Holy' (or the 'Paradise') gates. Following on from the description of 'a door was opened in heaven' (Revelation 4:10), the form and decoration of the doors has always seemed important. Writing about the symbolic meaning of a door as a boundary between the sacred and the profane, Mircea Eliade noted:

> A door opening into the interior of a church signifies an interruption of connection. The threshold that separates the two spaces simultaneously indicates the distance between two images of life: the secular and the religious. It is also a barrier, a frontier, that separates two worlds and sets them in opposition; and from the other point of view it is that paradoxical place where they encounter each other, where the secular world may make its transition into the sacred world.[38]

On this level the 'royal doors' of the Abramtsevo church, as well as its portal, can reveal much to the historian. They follow on from Old Russian structures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but bring to them both a new arrangement of elements and new devices for displaying the images (illus. 74, 76). This particularly affects the canopy over the 'royal doors', the placing of the icon of the *Last Supper* in the iconostasis, and the choice of symbols that form the ornamental decor of the church portal. The canopy is an ancient dome-shaped structure, the roots of which go back through Byzantium to the ancient Near East. Framings in the form of a canopy, a baldachin and a ciborium were long employed to symbolize the heavenly paradise as a cosmic dwelling place or a city – the Heavenly Jerusalem. In the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church, however, the canopy crowns not only the 'royal doors', but also the composition as a whole. It includes characteristic

ornament from the Gardens of Paradise, which, being a realm of peace and tranquillity, are located beyond the limit of historical time and have long been symbolized by representations of flowers, fruits and birds. The motif of paradise is visible in the ornament of the upper section of the iconostasis frame, where there is a row of carved *kokoshniki* on top, below which run bands of vegetal ornament showing harebells, ox-eye daisies and wild herbs. Also included in the design of the canopy are a leafy vine scroll, framed on each side by ears of wheat, ancient symbols of life and abundance, and further down twigs carrying red pomegranates and white field daisies (illus. 78). In the context of the 'paradise' semantics of the New Jerusalem, pomegranates represent symbolic fruits in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:18, 20, 42). The biblical description of the temple mentions columns linked with 'networks' of woven vine motifs and crowned with an abundance of pomegranates, which symbolize eternal life, fruitfulness and resurrection; the columns of the Abramtsevo iconostasis follow this, with vine stems woven about the capitals.



The appearance of the canopy as a decorative form over the 'royal doors' is of interest in the context of Baroque aesthetic theory. Since the second half of the seventeenth century the beauty of these doors as the chief framing for the altar of an Orthodox church had been explained through various interpretations and symbolic meanings.

74 'Royal doors': iconostasis of the church of St John the Divine on the River Ishna, near Rostov the Great, 1685.



Their treatment led in the direction of 'liberated art'. Baroque illusionism, metaphorical allusion and the master craftsman's skill in design all mingled together in the embellishment of the doors, and hence in the organization of the open or closed quality of the altar space. As with the new type of Baroque icon, fundamental symbolic representations and elements readily change places in the system of the 'royal doors'. Now their place is defined by the artistic concept of the craftsman undertaking the church commission. Hence the canopy above the 'royal doors' of 1685 from the church of St John the Divine on the River Ishna near Rostov the Great, which Polenov took as the model for his own doors, is complex in form, has very rich carving and a multitude of recesses for icons. When icons are set in this manner they may be likened to precious stones in the diadem of the Mother of God, who is increasingly described in the literature of the second half of the seventeenth century as a gateway, a window or a staircase leading to the Heavenly Kingdom. In interpretations of the Akathist she is seen as a 'closed gate', 'gateway to the East' and 'gate of paradise'. She is also likened to a mirror adorned with a frame in the 'Discourse on the Introduction of the Mother of God into the Temple' published in a collection of sermons by Antoniy Radivilovsky called *The Garden of Mary Mother of God* (Kiev, 1676). If the stern Middle Ages as a rule linked the symbolism of the 'royal doors' primarily with Christ, following biblical passages where his symbol is a 'door' (John 10:1, 3, 7, 9) or 'light' (John 8:12; 9:5), by contrast from the second half of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth this symbolism could change and gain additional meanings depending on the role of the Church in the world, and also on the understanding of that role by patron and artist.

A special place in the construction of the 'royal doors', for example, might be allocated to the image

75 Church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo in 1881–2. Postcard.



of the Last Supper – Christ's testament of the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into his body and blood – in connection with a person's belief in the power of the Church. As early as the second half of the sixteenth century the desire to show the central significance of the mystery of the Eucharist for the soul's attainment of paradise resulted in the image of the Last Supper being placed above the doors in a special niche.[39] Gradually, however, this image was moved closer to the *katapetasma*, the hanging that covered the space of the doors above their two leaves, and by the eighteenth century it could be seen on the doors themselves, often in sculptural relief. One characteristic example is on the 'royal doors' in the church of St Nikola Nadein at Yaroslavl (1751) (illus. 76). Attributed

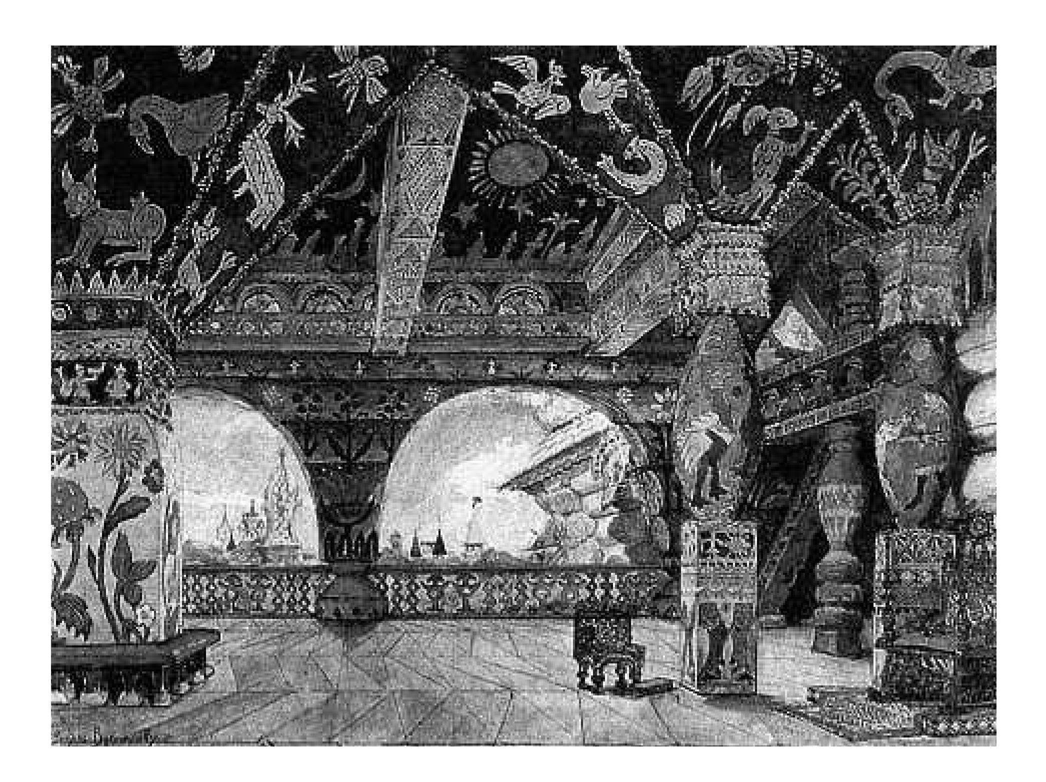
76 'Royal doors': iconostasis of the church of St Nikola Nadein, Yaroslavl, 1751.



to designs by the Russian craftsman Fyodor Volkov, these doors are a typical example of 'Elizabethan Baroque', tending towards luxuriance and illusionism. By representing the figure of Christ against a background of the altar barrier as the 'First Priest' before the altar, the creators of the doors attempted to bring the scene of the Eucharist into maximal proximity with the space of the nave. Flying angels pull back a symbolic curtain (*katapetasma*), revealing the space of the altar to the believers' view. The whole scene is reminiscent of a Baroque theatre and contains all kinds of elements of Baroque decoration: cartouches, shells, volutes, scrolls with inscriptions, fruits and plants. All available means were used to convince people of the power of the mystery of the Eucharist through the artistic embellishment of the chief frame of the altar.

As has already been mentioned, the architect Matvey Kazakov placed the image of the *Last Supper* as if on the pediment of a Greek temple. By contrast, the Abramtsevo 'royal doors' follow an older tradition by setting this scene in a special niche above the door-leaves. On either side of the leaves, however, Polenov placed black columns with carved capitals supporting the *kosmitis*, the name given in Old Russia to an architrave. A special feature of its structure was that the *kosmitis* was rhetorically compatible with the *Last Supper* representation. The scene in the niche takes place at night and is in turn attached to a *kosmitis* imitating a night sky, with planets, stars and comets shown against a dark background (illus. 77). From this the viewer is given to understand that the action of the *Last Supper* is taking place in a Russian church against a background of the night sky, since the

77 Detail of Vasiliy Polenov's iconostasis in the church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow.



action appears to extend beyond the limits of the first frame-niche and is bound together with the whole symbolic structure of the 'royal doors' and of the iconostasis generally. There are definite grounds for accepting that this *kosmitis* was executed after drawings by Polenov, since in part it echoes the starry sky of his 1885 stage designs for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Snegurochka* (*The Snow Maiden*, illus. 78).

Religious and secular art also offered similar solutions to resolving the problem of the openness or enclosure of altar space, in the planning of which the structure of the 'royal doors' was always important. The doors hindered viewing and served as the fundamental barrier against beholding the liturgical act. They also linked the community of believers with the secret space of the altar, to which entry was forbidden for ordinary mortals. If in a Byzantine church, curtains, and later the gates of the templon, merely fenced off the altar, by contrast in the Russian medieval iconostasis they gave it an inaccessible appearance. The mystery of the Eucharist was concealed behind an impenetrable wall of icons and a door that was opened only at the moment of the Divine Liturgy when the Holy Gifts (the sacraments) were carried out through it. Thus during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the gates might consist of two elongated icons, serving as solid shutters, as may be found in the 'royal doors' (*c.* 1400) from the Nektariyev Pokrov monastery in the Tver region, now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, on which are depicted *St John Chrysostom* and *St Basil the Great*.[40] Significant changes in this arrangement can be observed from the second half of the seventeenth century as the 'royal doors' began to lose their

78 Viktor Vasnetsov, *The Hall of Tsar Berendey*, sketch for decor of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*, 1885. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

medieval inaccessibility and, to some extent, even became penetrable to the viewer's gaze. Their leaves began to be covered with fretwork carving, allowing one to catch a glimpse of what was happening at the altar. The leaves themselves were made lower, thus opening up the altar space, as for example in the SS Peter and Paul Cathedral in St Petersburg (1722–6) or in the iconostasis project, already mentioned, by Kazakov. Through the openwork grid or over a low barrier the altar space could be mysteriously glimpsed by the light of candles, so working on people's imagination. To the extent that a Renaissance cultural pattern was adopted, the frame of the 'royal doors' aimed to open up the altar space in a comparable way to how the casing of Russian icons of the eighteenth century at times tended towards revealing the sacred pictures.

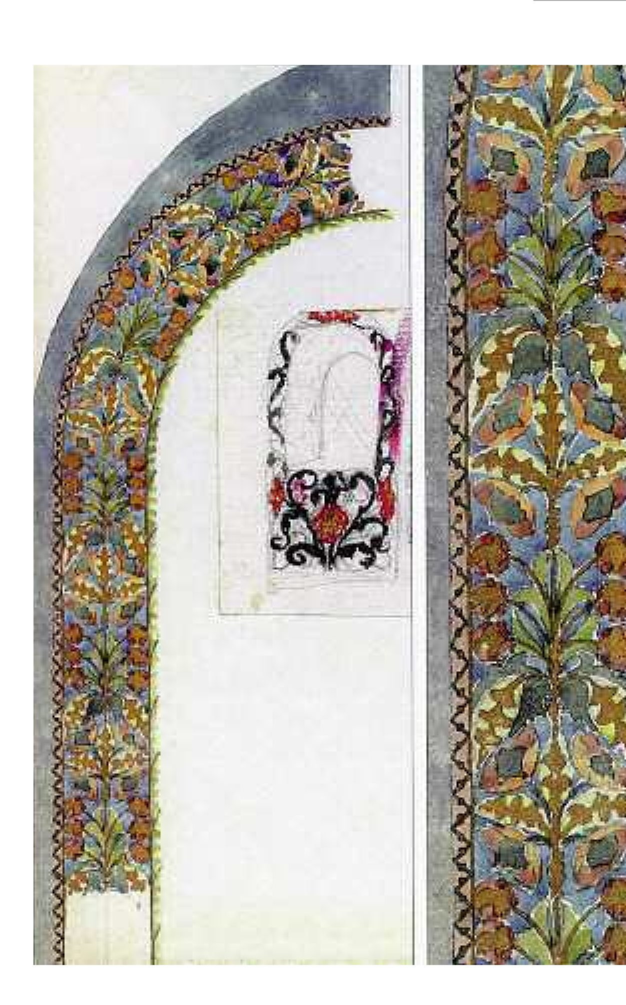
Under the influence of the new aesthetic theories the 'royal doors' could also be regarded as the entrance to a church. This communicated additional meanings. The 'royal doors' in the Chapel of the Three Hierarchs of the Church of the Resurrection on the Debra in Kostroma (1651) are reminiscent, for example, of the portal of a Renaissance cathedral. In addition, however, the door of a church could remind one of the entrance to the altar space, or rather the 'gates of paradise' on the boundary between the sacred space of the nave and the super-sacred altar space. Not only the portals of cathedrals acquired new forms: many gateways into a church or monastic compound were given the profiles of bell-towers or churches, in the same way that the small frames set with portraits of the evangelists on 'royal doors' increasingly resemble churches. From around the middle of the seventeenth century the entrances to Russian sacred buildings are also adorned by a porch, with the roof topped by a spire symbolizing the vault of heaven. A similar spire could be seen above the altar table when the 'royal doors' were opened. Finally, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the structure of the iconostasis turned into the architectural simulacrum of a temple, the 'royal doors' attempted to preserve the form of earlier types of portal, since the 'wall of paradise' (the architectural frame of an iconostasis) was perceived as nothing less than the 'wall of a sacred building'. This is particularly characteristic of official churches at the time of the 'Elizabethan Baroque'. The same thing is encountered during the Classicism of Alexander I and the 'Empire Style' under Nicholas I, echoing Catholic altars from between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Abramtsevo church, however, the symbolic link between portal and iconostasis has become less obvious. Symbols from different periods are located capriciously on its limestone portal, their components evidently mixed up: here we can find a fish, the ancient symbol of Christ, symbols of the evangelists (an eagle, a bull, a man and a lion), and representations of a horse, an ass, a cockerel and a goat, all linked with various events of the gospel story (illus. 79). They all carry an enhanced ornamental character, since their intention is to conduct a person into the very 'atmosphere' of ancient culture, to create a particular religious mood. This effect is repeated in the interwoven ornament.[41] In this way, from the beginning of the post-medieval period, the outlines of portals and 'royal doors' more and more actively engaged the human imagination in the creation of a mental image of 'paradise' – that is, just like icon frames they strove for a greater effect on the perceiving consciousness.



Finally, so as to comprehend the 'boundary of paradise', something should be said about the particular qualities of *wall* and *window*. A wall separates the sacred building from the world, while a window joins them. Consequently, the wall and the window can always be relied upon to unravel some sort of mystery that is concealed within. All forms of religious art contain hidden meaning. Thus Old Russian sacred buildings were always distinguished by the smoothness of their walls, which Vasnetsov and Polenov reconfigured in the Abramtsevo church in the spirit of *stil' modern* culture. From the outside the limestone walls are cut through by window openings in a new kind of pattern – Vasnetsov took as their formal basis the round-headed windows found in Old Russian architecture up to the sixteenth century. On the inside Polenov also left the walls white, but allowed the window recesses to be adorned with vegetal ornament taken from living plants and painted from sketches by Andrey Mamontov (illus. 80, 81). This created not only a particular mood (evoking a sense of the 'mysterious' atmosphere of an ancient place of worship), but also played an important part in displaying the icons. The white background of the walls lent the icons what might be called an extra charge of transcendentalism, emphasizing their uniqueness as *works of art*. And in this sense the white walls of our church, perhaps, foreshadowed the architecture of the 'white cube' as a contemporary art gallery, with its urge towards a neo-sacral worship of aesthetic objects. To reach that point, however, its forms had to undergo a long journey.

With the arrival of Baroque aesthetic theory in Muscovite Russia during the second half of the seventeenth century, we again come across that new, stylized and concentrated beauty in whose language the artist speaks about the meanings of the Christian faith. From that moment on, the window frame receives heightened attention. As one of the most important forms of Renaissance illusionistic art, it plays a special role in demarcating the boundary between the visible and the invisible. It also acquires additional meanings, and is imbued with the capability to speak of fundamental changes in the culture. Thus the widening of the window aperture in Russian churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enables the new allocation of the zones of divine grace, to embody which the

79 Detail of ornamental carving on the portal of the church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

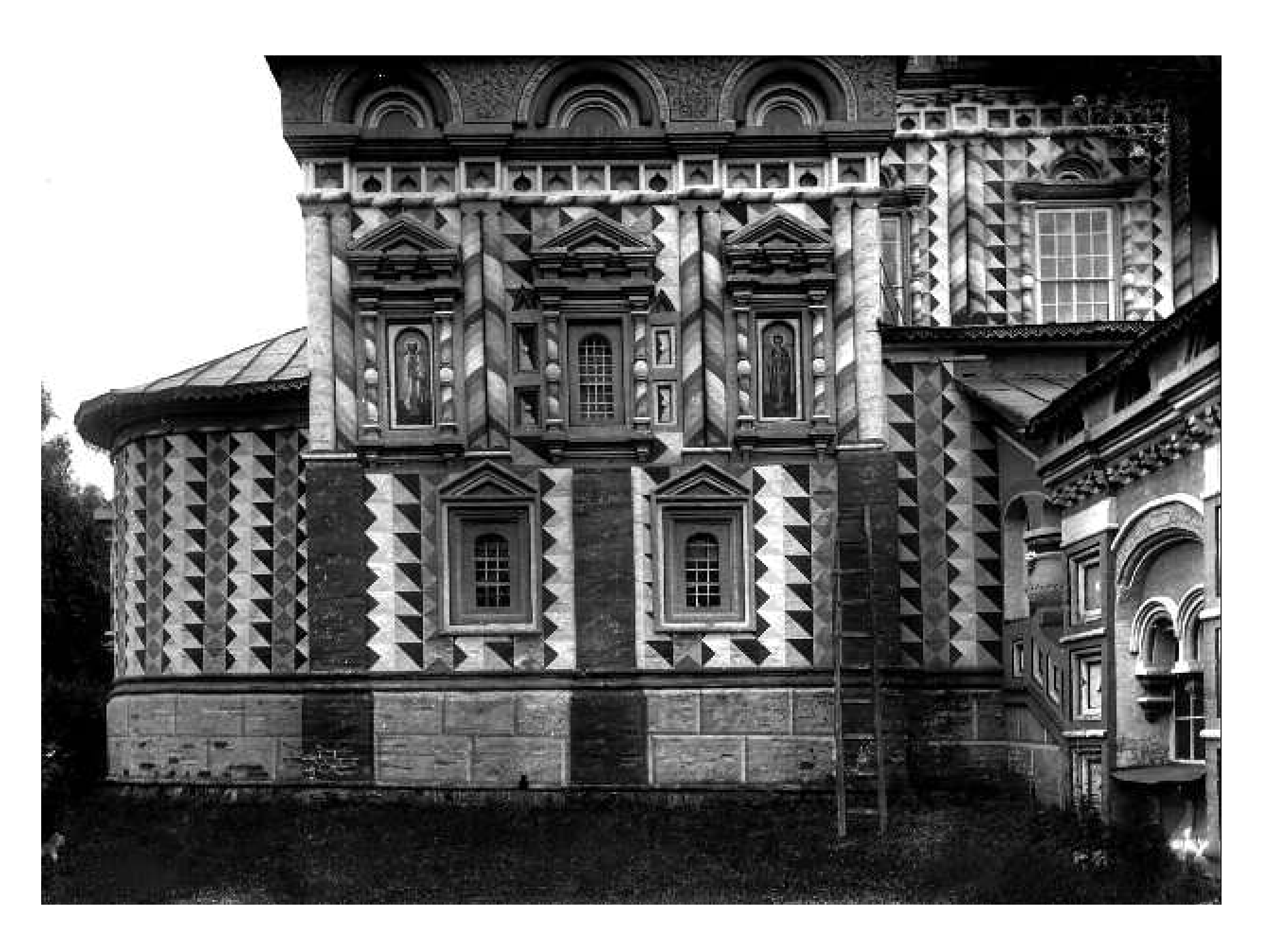




artist draws upon external painting of the walls, the decoration of the window surrounds and a new system of the dramaturgy of light. This grasps one's attention, for example, in the painting of the walls and the framing of windows of the church of the Resurrection in Kostroma (illus. 82). The window surrounds and external paintwork deliberately lead here to a sense of the walls' instability, since the builder's aim seems to have become the creation of an effect of a *flickering boundary* between space within the church and space outside. Against the background of this wall painting, the window surrounds try to make a gap in the boundary between the two worlds. The window apertures themselves remain small, and they are closed off by a grille, creating a 'defence' for the Christian holy place. But to the extent that the architectural decoration of the Russian church internalizes general European elements and renounces the pre-Petrine tradition, window spaces become considerably wider and adopt various forms, while the wall acquires tectonic elements. False windows, framed with the same surrounds as real ones, appear on the facades of eighteenth-century churches, as they also do on secular buildings.[42] As a result the windows of Russian places of worship in the seventeenth and

80 Andrey Mamontov, Sketch of ornament for a window niche of the church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

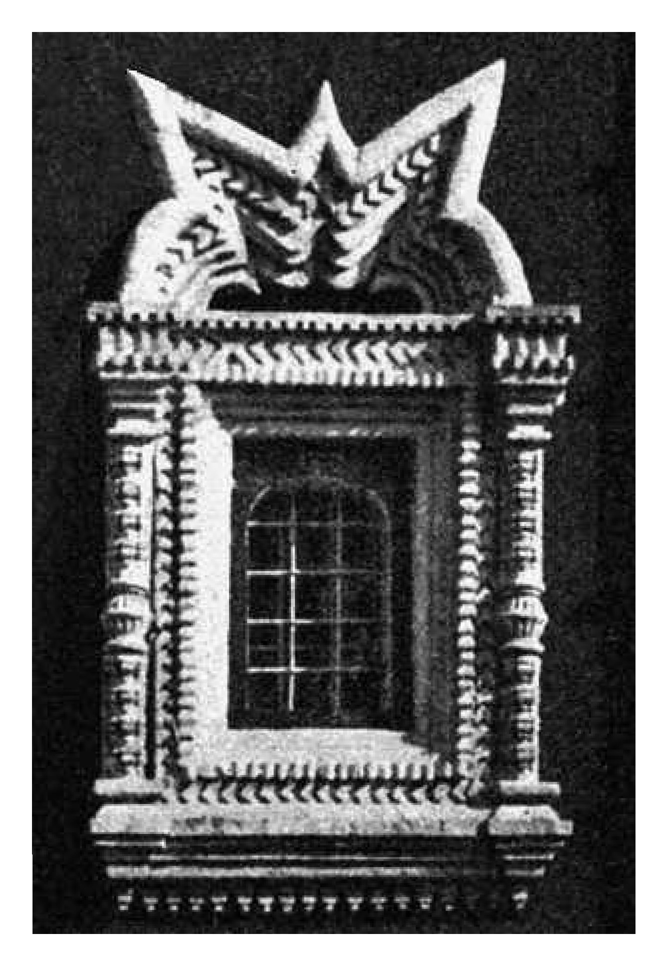
81 Ornamental wall painting for the church of the Saviour Not Made by Hands at Abramtsevo, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.



eighteenth centuries let in great streams of light. Daylight becomes a most important element of the church interior. That is to say, just as on Baroque icons the boundary between heaven and earth was opened up a little with the help of a curtain, so in architecture it was opened up by a window, which played a major part in the dramaturgy of light.[43] Different degrees of lighting lent particular beauty to a church interior. Since the windows had been given complex shapes, light fell in sharply defined masses of irregular form. Setting out from new aesthetic principles, the heart was made glad by light, and was enthused with the plan of divine beauty.

Here too the window surrounds themselves could also acquire additional meanings. It may be cautiously asserted that the appearance of a crown-shaped element at the top of window surrounds in the later seventeenth century was connected with an enhancement of the cult of the Mother of God. Like the luxuriant 'crown' in the system of the 'royal doors', this window decoration could symbolize the crown of the Mother of God. The connection can be discerned, for example, if we compare the icon of the Vladimir *Mother of God* from Volokolamsk (1572, illus. 84) and a window surround with crown-shaped decoration in the church of the

82 Wall of the north chapel of the church of the Resurrection, Kostroma. 1651.





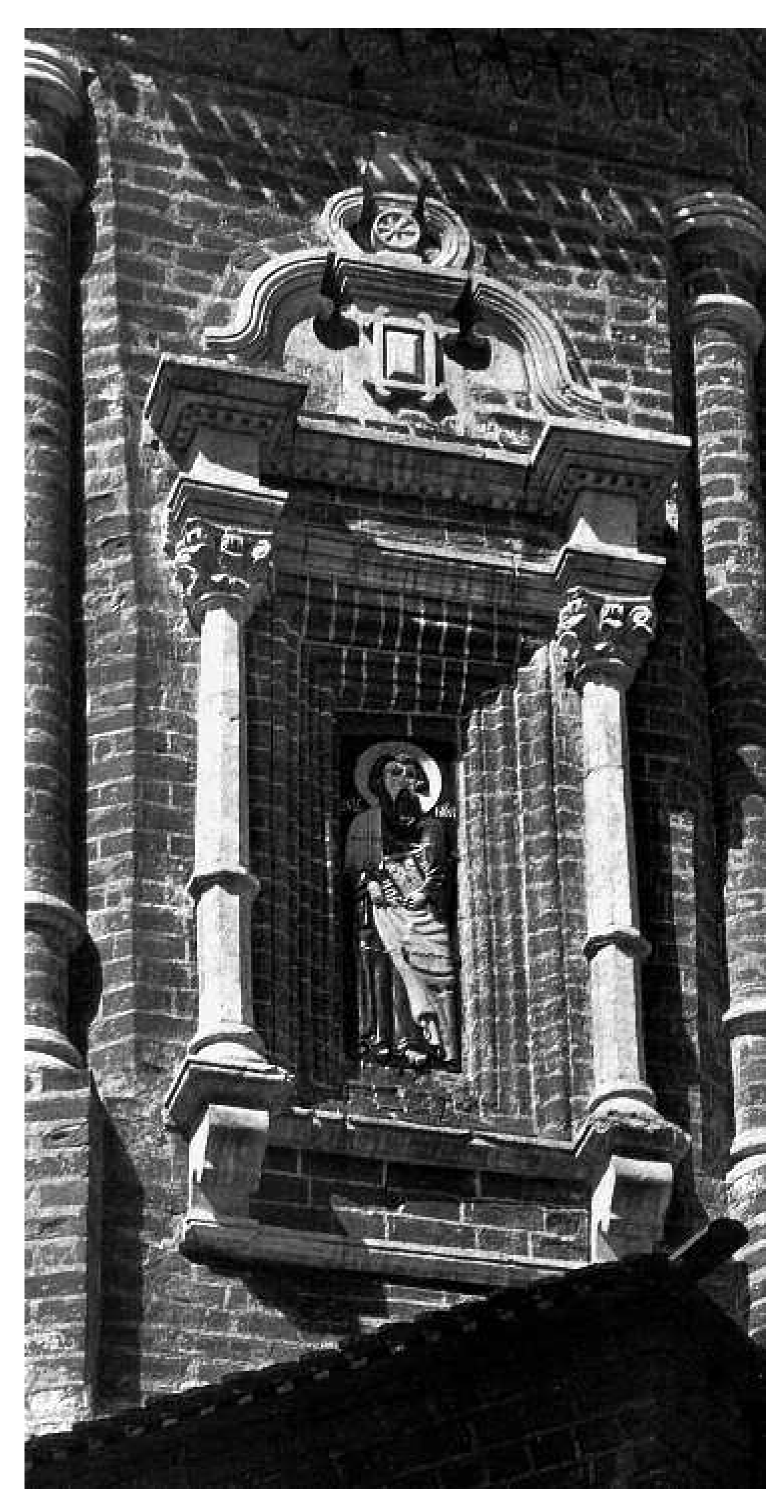
Kazan Mother of God (1690) in the village of Markovo, Moscow Province (illus. 83).[44] It is known that, in accordance with biblical texts, commentaries and prayers, the walls and windows of a sacred building were identified with Christ and the Mother of God themselves. In the Middle Ages it was basically the Christological symbolism of the window that was recognized. But in the Renaissance and Baroque periods this symbolism more often began to touch upon the theme of the Mother of God, which had indeed been known earlier. As early as the fifteenth century Western art had known the Virgin Mary as 'fenestra crystallina' and 'fenestra coeli' ('crystal clear window' and 'heavenly window'). With the rise in significance of themes connected with the Virgin during the Counter-Reformation, this symbolism more frequently emerged in the foreground. Rays of the sun, symbolizing Christ, penetrate through the glass of the window, leaving it untouched. They simply transform it into a symbol of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary as 'fenestra crystallina'. Thus too at the end of the Middle Ages in Italy and northern Europe the descent of the Holy Spirit in compositions of the Annunciation was shown in the form of a cluster of rays of the sun, penetrating the

83 Window surround at the church of the Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan in the village of Markovo, Moscow province, 1690.

84 *Vladimir Mother of God* from Volokolamsk, 1572. Rublyov Central Museum of Early Russian Culture and Art, Moscow.

window glass. Hence the Virgin was also understood to be the 'fenestra coeli', since this was the window through which Christ came to earth.[45] A commentary on part of the Song of Songs, where the bridegroom sees his beloved in a window, serves as the basis for this symbolism. The Church is the Bride, awaiting her Bridegroom, which is the reason why her appearance, her wall, her windows through which divine light symbolizing Christ can arrive, are so important. And here we clearly encounter the frame as a locus for the reunion of God – remote from us – and Eros.

In the art of the Russian Baroque, though, this rich symbolic system underwent an interesting change of direction in its application both to the iconostasis and to the forms of window surrounds. Optical illusion, one of the main foundations of the Renaissance and Baroque cast of mind, reminds us once again that the frame is drawn towards a particular role it can play in the process of perception. For just that reason the window surround in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth could easily serve as the casing frame for an icon. Thus icons of saints were placed in the false windows of the Resurrection Church in Kostroma (illus. 82). Such examples can easily be multiplied. Between the domes on the roof of the church of the Smolensk Mother of God (1694–7) in the village of Gordeyevka, near Nizhniy Novgorod,



85 Window surround with evangelist icon, church of St John the Baptist, over the gatehouse of the Solotchinsky monastery, 1695, Ryazan.



the bell-tower itself was rebuilt after fires in 1635 and 1668.

All this speaks to us of the fact that in the new aesthetic circumstances the frame of a window of a Russian church was tending to turn towards resembling the frame for an image, as had happened in Italy during the Quattrocento. Thus either a painted icon or a relief carving might appear in a window frame. The frame, also a window, itself gradually adopted the order system in its forms. This trend unambiguously indicated that Renaissance ideals of beauty were actively securing their positions in Russian church architecture. If the keystones and cornices of a window frame with a depiction in relief of an evangelist at the Solotchinsky monastery (1695) are already accompanied by 'Baroque' columns (illus. 85), then in the period of Classicism the ancient order system is finally affirmed. Entire compositions undergo transformation in the embellishment of windows and niches, now reproducing ancient entablatures with architrave, frieze and cornice.

The beauty of a Baroque frame was measured by how much its superfluity of adornment astonished the viewer. What counted as beauty in the framing of a window or niche in the age of Classicism was its severity and its smooth surfaces with clear, unfussy decoration. These qualities were to persuade the viewer that he or she was

86 Statue on a salient of the chapel wall of the St Michael Castle in St Petersburg, 1798-1800.

standing before the very embodiment of the laws of divine harmony. Such is the framing of a niche for a statue on a salient of the chapel in the St Michael Castle (1797–1800), St Petersburg (illus. 86). Situated so as to be an adornment for the chapel's wall, and derived from classical artistic ideals, the statue was meant to evoke enthusiasm in the eyes of believers as a manifestation of absolute beauty. The statue's pose and gesture are calculated to evoke the attainment of higher reason. Its classical proportions and forms corresponded to a striving towards the beauty of another, superior world: 'Christian art does not content itself with this world, with achieved and perfected beauty, but leads off elsewhere, towards a beauty that is unlimited and beyond this world.'[46]

In other words, the ideal proportions of this statue and the framing of its niche reflected not only serene majesty but also the heavenly joys. According to the classical conception of the sublime, sculpture is the loftiest manifestation of beauty, as Winckelmann (for whom Bernini was the 'destroyer of art'[47]) had asserted. Therefore, the luxuriant beauty of Baroque framings could serve only as a negative example. Nonetheless, in the nineteenth century the classical forms of the window surround and niche turned out to be adaptable to the new, Romantic currents in art.

Icon Case and Picture Frame

A closed casing implies that the meaning of Creation and of human life is concealed and vanishes into mystery; an open one demonstrates that everything is on show – it is accessible, close by and comprehensible. This is the whole rhetoric of the casing of a holy image: the case strives to hide or convey a mystery, to put a person further from it or closer to it. The ornament and structure of the Abramtsevo church are connected with this rhetoric. The Vasnetsov *Mother of God* to the left of the 'royal doors' is the clearest image within this system. Shut into a case in the form of an Old Russian church, it is obviously set apart within the interior (illus. 87). And the first thing that strikes the eye is this: that the case attempts to align itself with a quite different culture from that of the *Mother of God* icon, which resembles the *Sistine Madonna*. In the second half of the nineteenth century Raphael's picture was displayed in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, within a Renaissance-style tabernacle (illus. 88). In comparison with this frame, the case designed by Polenov symbolizes a 'Russian house' for the Mother of God: Vasnetsov's modern Romantic icon. The case underlines the 'national' quality of religion and the exceptional quality of the image, rendering homage to Slavophile ideas. Just the same can be said about the casing for the image of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, painted by Ilya Repin (illus. 89). In Christian tradition this image of the Saviour is the first icon (or icon-reliquary) of Christ, receiving the name of the Mandylion, that is, an uncreated image. According to the legend about Abgar, King of Edessa, the Mandylion appeared miraculously on a cloth after the Saviour had covered his face with it.[48] The location of this image to the right of the 'royal doors' was connected with the dedication of the Abramtsevo church to it. Consequently, it played a leading role in the decoration of the whole church. So while Vasnetsov, in working on an image of the Mother of God, created a new Romantic icon, Repin set himself no less responsible a task by creating his own 'First Icon' of Christ. In response to the

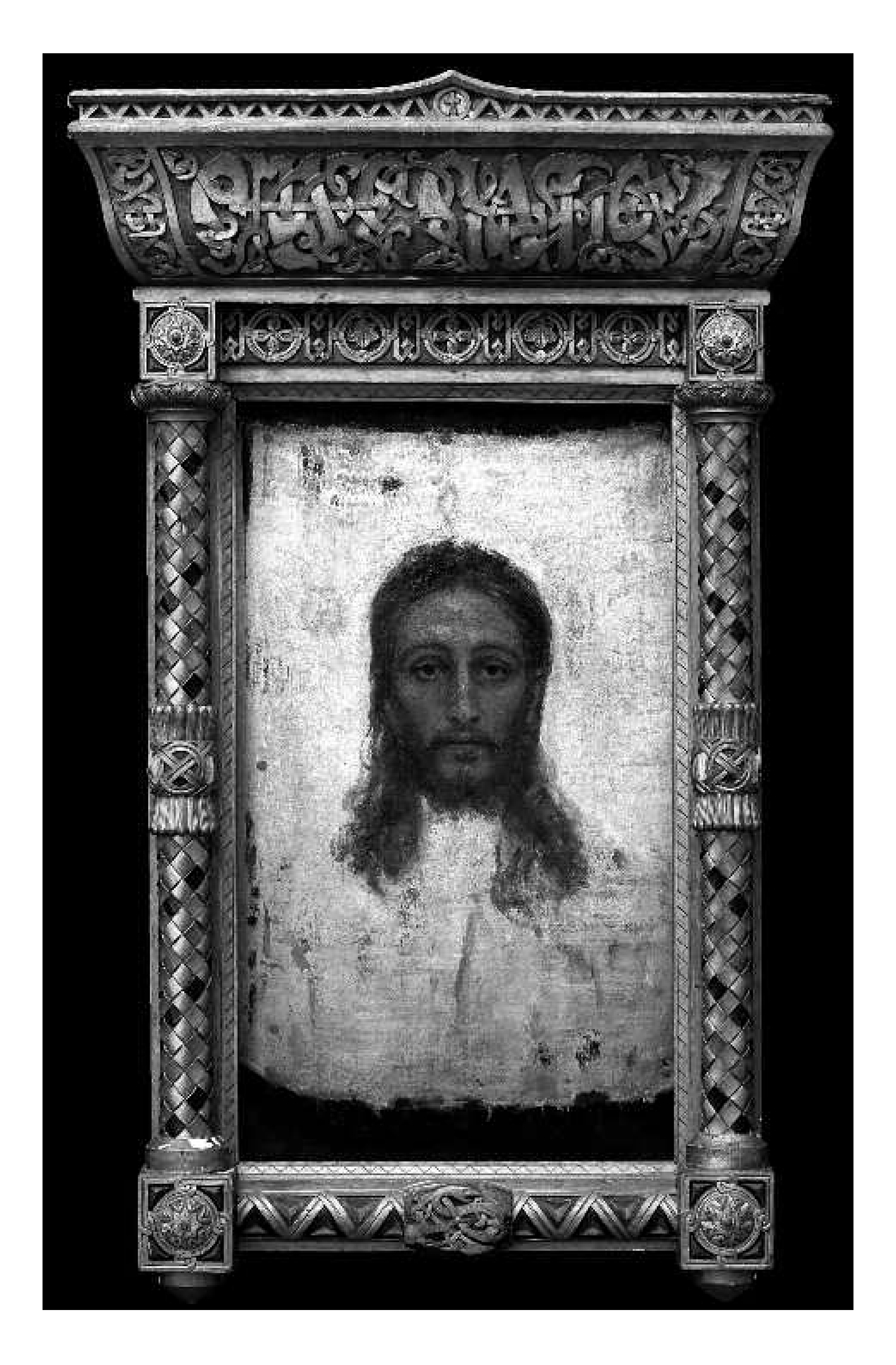




aesthetic of naturalism, the portrait itself was taken from life: it was the artist and architect Viktor Gartman, whose paintings and drawings later served as the theme for the composer Mussorgsky's famous *Pictures at an Exhibition*, who posed for Repin. Consequently, in this new temple to the aesthetic religion, it was an artist who took on the role of Christ as Creator of the world. The new Mandylion creatively affirmed the artistic attitude towards the world, in which people sensed a break-through into the world of genuine, absolute beauty. Polenov distinctly complicated this image by shutting it inside a traditional Russian casing, in which a medieval aesthetic was combined with Renaissance allegory. It is not by chance that Vasnetsov once compared his work on the Abramtsevo church with 'the artistic break between the Middle Ages and the age of the Renaissance'.[49]

87 Vasiliy Polenov, case for the icon of the *Mother of God with Child* by Viktor Vasnetsov, 1881–2. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

88 Raphael, *The Sistine Madonna*, 1515–16, displayed in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, in 1855.



89 Vasiliy Polenov, case for Repin’s icon of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*, 1881–2.
State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History ‘Abramtsevo’, Moscow province.





The interaction of frames and pictures made this comparison quite evident. Reviving the symbolic nature of ornament, Polenov 'encoded' the title of the image – the word 'Saviour' – into the decor of the frame, and put it on the crown of the casing, that is in the very zone that symbolized paradise (or the dome of the heavens, illus 90). Hence the title of the image, as it were, augmented the heavenly space of the frame and entered 'into the image as a pictorial means' and was a 'commemoration of the invisible in the visible'.[50] In addition, on the lower side of the case, on the 'ground', the eye encountered an ouroboros (a snake consuming its own tail), which was a Renaissance symbol for the closed nature of time (illus. 91). In the iconographic tradition of the Renaissance this creature united Time and Reason.[51] It was also included in the *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo, and was elucidated by

90 Ornamental inscription on the crown of the case.

91 Ouroboros: another detail of the case.

many Italian humanists, in particular Ficino.[52] As a result the Polenov casing included an additional idea affecting the perception of the modern icon of Christ. Its ornament created a quite special visual and verbal reality. The frame made one's gaze embrace the image as a whole, while additional messages were received from the periphery of vision. Thus the frame induced the image to play an active part in the world, dictating the creative perception of the object.

But where did the forms of Polenov's casings come from, what meanings did they have, how did they expand within the milieu of Russian culture, and finally have any of the intended meanings been lost? In the Russian language the word *kiot* or *kivot* ('casing') has a double meaning. It can mean a box or a frame within which an icon is placed. It can also be applied to the biblical Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10). Appearing under various spellings, the word is defined in the nineteenth-century dictionary compiled by Dal' as 'Repository for holy icons', and it goes on to say that 'the Jews used to keep the tablets of the covenant within a cedar-wood and golden kivot', while nowadays in synagogues the Pentateuch of Moses is kept there . . . they call the kivot Oron-ga-kodesh'.[53] In the Middle Ages the construction of a *kivot* was a most important part of 'church making', which required the adornment of a church through such means as all kinds of ciboria, decorated altar rails, 'royal doors', hangings and prayer images with cloths. All of these brought the church closer to the Old Testament Temple of Solomon. In this process a canopy over an altar, the framing structure of the iconostasis, and the individual frame of an icon could all be called *kivot*. The construction of a *kivot* was always considered an act that was pleasing to God; however we cannot help but notice that the Old Russian texts basically give us information about church casings. Thus according to the tale in the Kiev Patericon of the Caves Monastery, the great-grandson of a rich man who had been ill, but was cured by the miracle-working icon painter Alimpiy, placed 'golden bands above the kivot over the holy table to keep it clean'.[54] But producing a new casing for the chief holy object of Muscovite Russia, the icon of the *Vladimir Mother of God*, was considered a pious act with state significance. In a narrative called 'About the Most Pure Vladimir Icon' of 1514 we learn that Prince Vasily III ordered a new case to be made for the famous holy object, decorated 'with silver and gold' and inscribed: 'In the year 7022 (1514) this kivot was made for the image of the most holy Mother of God, painted by the evangelist Luke'.[55] Later, in an inventory of 1627 from the Dormition Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, we read:

> The image of the most holy Mother of God, painted by the evangelist Luke, in a casing, the case set about with silver and with shuttering, and on the shutters the image of the Annunciation to the most holy Mother of God, also the evangelists in silver high relief, and also on the case a cross of silver wrought into an apple shape . . . [56]

As it happens, important state events were associated with the casing of the *Vladimir Mother of God*. Thus, since the election of Russian patriarchs and prelates took place in the presence of this icon, the lots were placed in the casing. According to the ritual one of them carried the name of the future prelate, who would be made known after one of the

lots was taken out of the case by an archbishop and the other – the winning one – by the Tsar himself.[57]

With the arrival of a new rhetoric and new aesthetics in Muscovite Russia during the second half of the seventeenth century, however, we encounter some very important changes. It was at this time that the gradual destruction of the ark of the medieval icon, and its replacement on the prayer image by a 'picture frame', took place; the latter could be detached from it in order to adorn a secular image on paper, canvas or metal. Under these conditions, there is overwhelming archival information about orders for individual casing frames, whether for church icons or for personal prayer images. We can reasonably speculate that the mass dissemination of domestic casings for personal and family icons answered to the new Renaissance world outlook of Russian culture. It was linked with the individualization of religious feeling and the formation of norms for personal piety.[58] This first had an impact on court culture. Documents concerning the Armoury Chamber under Tsar Aleksey (*reg* 1645–76) are peppered with orders for frames for prayer images: on 10 October 1684, for example, the tsar's painter Ivan Bezmin was commanded to 'make frames with small wavy parallel fluting on it, to paint them with colours and sprinkle them with glass beads' for the image of the holy martyr Sofiya, 'to be drawn and painted'. In December 1685 the same Ivan Bezmin was given a special order from the government official Mikhail Timofeyevich Likhachov for the preparation, and also apparently the renovation, of casings for personal images from the chambers of Tsarevna Yekaterina Alekseyevna:

> The noble government servitor Mikhaylo Timofeyevich Likhachov has handed over . . . from the chambers of the Tsarevna Yekaterina Alekseyevna an image of the most holy Mother of God, seated upon a throne, with the eternal Child, in height 2½ vershoks [11 cm], 3½ vershoks wide; the image of the great martyr Catherine, painted on ochre coloured damask, in gilded fluted framing, in width two arshins [142 cm] less two vershoks [9 cm]; the half -length figure of the great martyr Demetrios . . . the image of the martyr Barbara . . . in gilded frames, the image of the most holy Martha, above whom are two angels, on each side, who hold branches, and in the middle – above – the image of the Saviour on a cloud . . . the image of the martyr Barbara, painted on iron . . . And it has been commanded to paint a carved casing for the image of the most holy Mother of God, just as the martyr Catherine has, and they should do for her as has been done for the image of the martyr Barbara, who is painted on iron, and for the image of the most holy Martha in the pattern of the same frame as for the martyr Barbara, who is painted on iron, and for the image of the martyr Catherine a carpented frame with fluting, in size to the height of 5½ vershoks [24 cm], in width two arshins less two vershoks, to be completed, and whatever does not reach up to the image should have the same damask attached to it and have new painting. And the dimensions of those frames have been sent to Ivan Bezmin lest he should forget.[59]

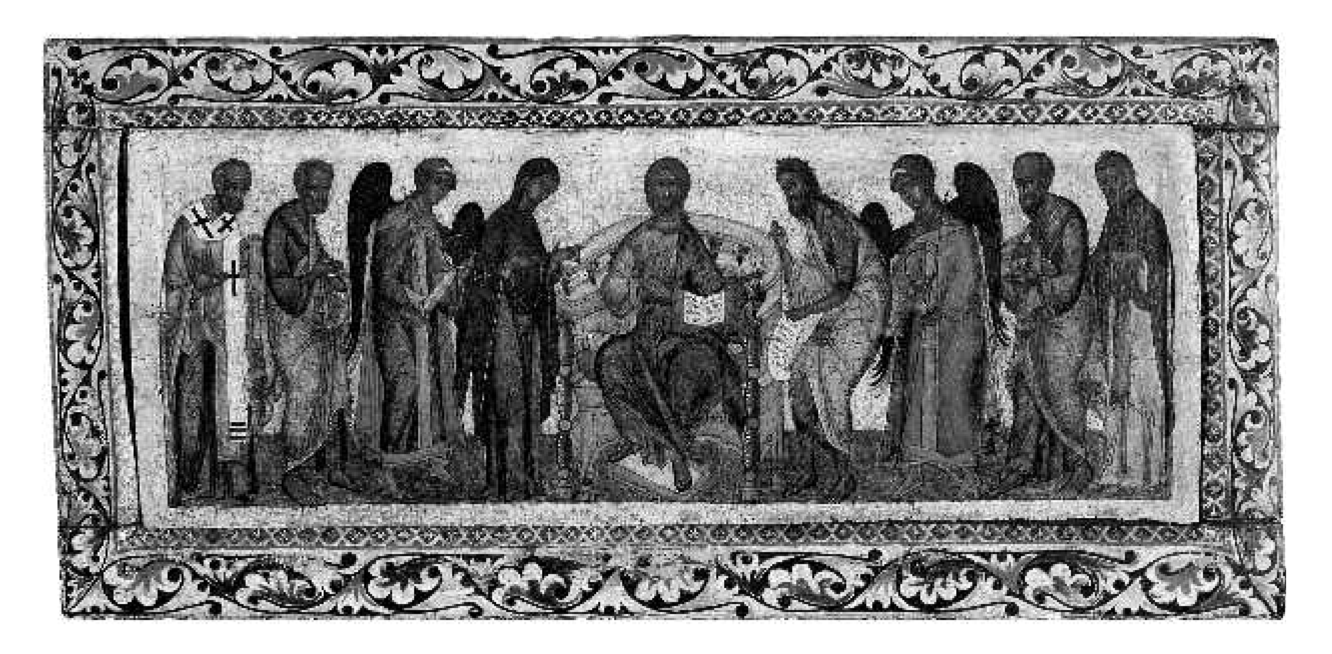
Ivan Bogdanov Saltanov (1630–1703), a pupil of Ivan Besmin and a famous artist in the Armoury Chamber, also made some frames. In January 1676



92 Ivan Saltanov(?), *Glorification of the Cross, with SS Constantine and Helena, Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, Tsaritsa Mariya Ilyinichna and Patriarch Nikon*, *c.* 1650–1700.

he painted two boards ‘for prayer’ and ‘for the rooms of the Tsar’, ‘a chair, little tables, a table, a board and a support’, and painted ‘with coloured pigments . . . a case for the chapel of St Theodore Stratilates’; here too he painted ‘flowers for the upper border in the middle of the cross’. In July 1677 Saltanov gilded a chair for the tsar and at the same time ‘gilded and silvered three frames as well . . . for the Lord’s Crucifix and for the portrait of Tsar Constantine, and also for the portrait of the blessed . . . Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, and for the portrait too of Tsaritsa Yelena, and also for the portrait in memory of the Tsaritsa Mariya Ilyinichna’. In the same year Saltanov painted the *Glorification of the Cross* with images of SS Constantine and Helena, and also Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, Tsaritsa Mariya Ilyinichna and Patriarch Nikon (illus. 92). Alexander Uspensky notes that ‘Saltanov painted the frame, of course, for his work; this is all the more assured since in 1679 he painted a similar picture, with the difference that the image of the Patriarch had been replaced by Tsarevich Aleksey Alekseyevich.’ In January 1690 he was again commanded ‘for the rooms of the Tsaritsa Natalya Kirillovna to paint on canvases – the Crucifixion, the Deposition from the Cross, the Entombment of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and to make for them frames with flutings’.[60] All these orders to make a wide variety of frames, and the possibility of identifying archival documents with actual surviving objects, allow us to define the existence in early modern Russian culture of three types of icon case.

The first is an ornamented frame, resembling a cut-out section from the horizontal structure of a later sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century iconostasis, or an ‘ark’ separated from its icon – more precisely the ornamental margins of an icon (illus. 93). The second type of case actually inherits the architectural composition of the Russian iconostasis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This can be a rectangular frame topped with something like a canopy or a tabernacle with Renaissance features and elements of the classical order system (illus. 99, 101, 103). Finally, the third type of case is a small frame in profile, which turns into a ‘picture frame’ and deliberately adopts the forms and decor of a secular interior (illus. 92, 113). All these types of framing for icons carry interesting cultural historical meanings.



Aloys Riegl, analysing the development of ornament in various civilizations over 5,000 years, came to what was in his time the sensational conclusion that ornamental forms are more strongly subject to their own laws than to any urge to imitate nature. At the same time the creation of ornament is often based not on functional necessity but on *Kunstwollen*, the unconscious striving for artistic expressiveness, the insuperable 'will towards artistic creation'. This 'artistic will' was reflected both in the formal properties of art and in the aesthetic theories contemporary with it.[61] In view of our topic we could also say that it forced ornament to *separate out* the frame, which was always fated to underscore representational form. This can clearly be discerned as early as the appearance of the first casings, closely linked with the medieval tradition.

It has long been established that the horizontal beams of a Russian iconostasis had been adorned with carved or painted decoration as far back as the fifteenth century. They were also covered with 'basma' (a thin layer of metal plate, moulded in low relief, concealing the painted surface), just as were the margins and background of old icons. However, as we have noted, from around the middle of the sixteenth century these horizontal members were linked together with smooth laths, as a result of which each icon received its own separate frame. As N. N. Sobolev wrote when discussing this topic,

> The location of icons in distinct rows and places within such multi-tiered iconostases was sanctioned by the Moscow church councils of 1547 and 1549. Horizontal beams with broad smooth boards separating the icons were at first decorated with paintwork; later the chisel replaced the brush, and on the smooth surface of the beams appeared the first incisions, linking all the icons together in a single compositional unit with their *beautiful frames* [my emphasis].[62]

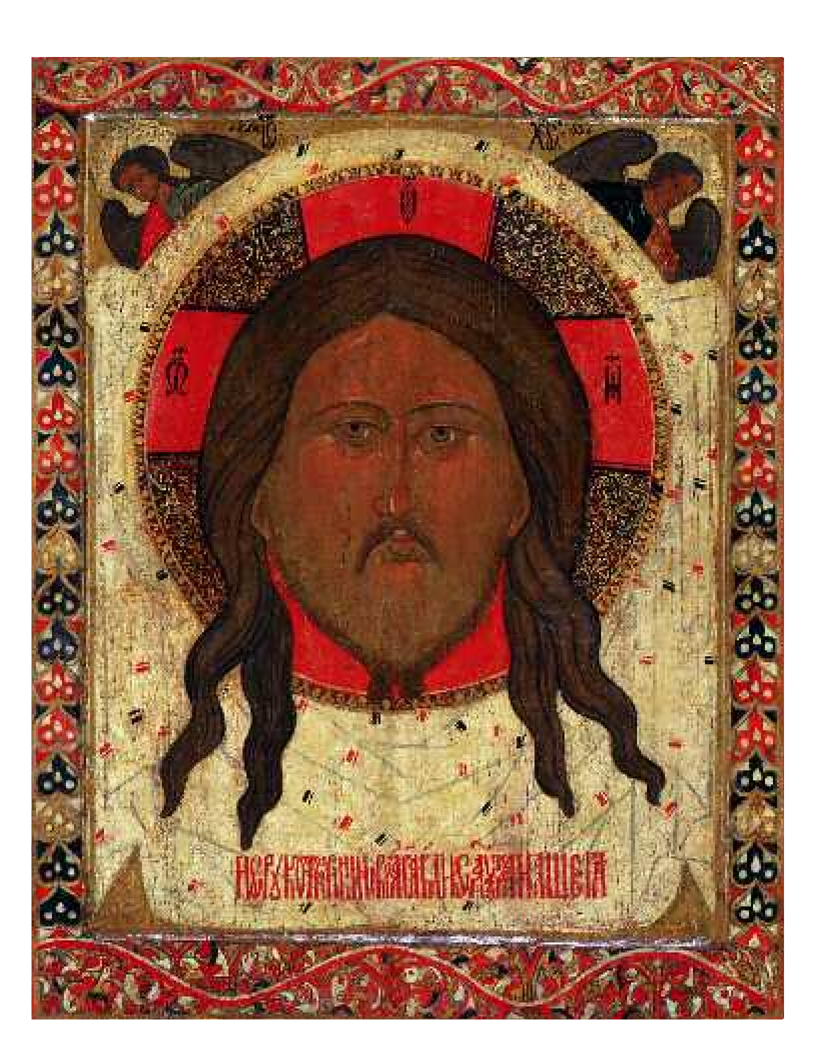
93 *Deisis*. second half of 16th century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



It was these carved and painted frames that in the sixteenth century began to be detached from the structure of the iconostasis, and were increasingly transferred to separate icons, so being turned into ark-casings. A carved frame of this type, for example, may be seen on the portable icon of the *Mother of God of the Sign* (sixteenth century; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) (illus. 94). Such an ornamental frame, reminiscent of iconostasis beams, is also to be seen on the icon of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands* of the last quarter of the sixteenth century (illus. 98). It should also be noted that, in parallel with the icons of the iconostasis being allocated separate small frames, the ornamental margins of the medieval icon also began gradually to become distinct: thus such an icon received an extra frame to embellish it, as if in response to the *Kunstwollen*, but still existing within the sacred space of medieval culture. Just such a frame accompanies a *Deisis* of the second half of the sixteenth century in the Tretyakov Gallery, which resembles a cutaway section of an iconostasis beam or margins removed from an icon (illus. 95, 96). Incidentally, it is the appearance of such

94 *Mother of God of the Sign*, mid-16th century.
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

95 *Saviour Not Made by Hands*,
late 16th century. Private collection.





96 *Deisis*, second half of 16th century, detail of case.
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

marginal frames, as they begin to stand apart, that indicates the arrival of the early modern period, and also of those cultural orientations that prepare for the arrival of the picture frame of the Western European image in Russian culture. And this is no accident: if in the West the picture frame grew out of the structure of the Gothic altar, in Russia it developed from the symbolic structure of the iconostasis or the icon case. At first this differentiation takes place in the field of visual perception: the frame is covered with brilliant ornament, making the image stand out, conflicting indeed with the surrounding space. But by approximately the end of the sixteenth century an ornamental framing case increasingly became the decoration for an icon, and later would acquire the function of a frame for a secular illustration.

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries cases and frames covered with brilliant ornament were widely disseminated in popular and Old Believer culture. In this context we should also remember the attraction that folk art has towards ornamentalism, about which Białostocki has written.[63] There are so many examples of this that



97 Icon case, 18th century, Vologda province. Private collection.

there would be no point in listing them all here. We shall note only that just such casings were invariably used to adorn the 'fine corner' of a peasant house. According to popular beliefs, the frame of a sacred location possessed a ritual and magical function, linked with the mythopoetic symbolism of the window as a way to make contact with supernatural forces.[64] It was a place where in everyday life a 'hierophany' took place, if one may borrow Eliade's term – that is, a manifestation of the 'sacred' in the secular.[65] Thus there was always a desire to adorn the 'fine corner' not only with an ornamental frame, but also with a brightly coloured curtain and such additions as fresh flowers, branches of pussy willow or osiers brought from a church on Palm Sunday. The 'fine corner' is a 'window' into the world of heavenly beauty, possessing a ritual function, and its frame is the same as a 'casing', an 'ark' or the 'metal covering' of an icon. In Russian popular art of the eighteenth century such a sacred place could be converted into a luxuriant carved frame (illus. 97). In the hands of an anonymous master craftsman it would turn into the embodiment of the Baroque tendencies that were formed

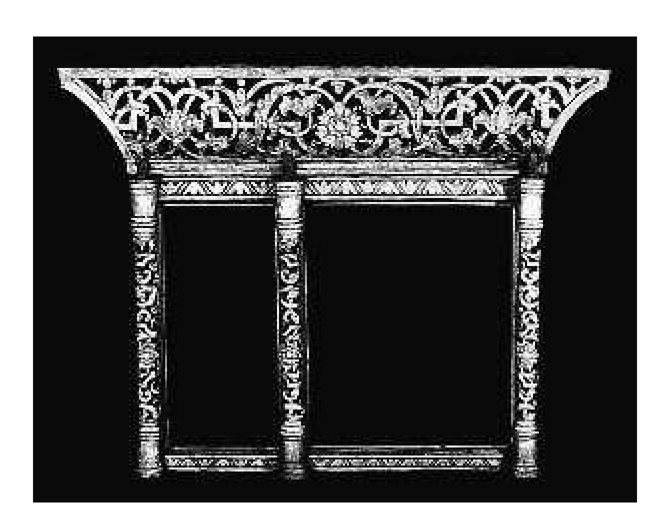


98 Framing case with icon, *c.* 1650–1700, church of Nikola Mokryy, Yaroslavl.

in the second half of the seventeenth century. Convincing testimony to this is an icon case from the church of Nikola Mokryy in Yaroslavl, known from a photograph taken by Ivan Barshchevsky at the end of the nineteenth century (illus. 98).

In the Baroque period such frames were evidently regarded as independent works of art, sometimes taking up more space than the objects for which they were intended.[66] Meanwhile, from the 1670s Moscow witnessed an influx of 'masters of the trade of architecture' and also wood-carvers from the Belorussian, Ukrainian and Polish lands. This was underscored by the introduction of 'German' vocabulary into the Russian language. In the agreement between Miron Klimov and Ivan Tyutrin, craftsmen at the Armoury Chamber, and the boyar Pyotr Sheremetev about the construction of an iconostasis for the church of the Veil (Pokrov) at the Novodevichiy Convent, we find several distorted Western European linguistic forms concerning frames.[67] In the history of Russian culture this indicated the appearance of the classical order system, as formulated in ancient Greece, which lay at the basis of the window-type frame during the Renaissance, enclosing a mimetic image. It is evident that forms deriving from the order system appeared in Muscovite Russia simultaneously both in the system of the Russian iconostasis and in the frames of icons and shapes of window surrounds, with the Renaissance frame beginning to be adapted to new cultural circumstances. Here it also began to undergo changes typical of any cultural phenomenon that has arrived in a new cultural context. As a result, Russian casings with an architectural composition divide themselves into rectangular frames with a topmost element like a canopy, and Renaissance-style tabernacles with elements of the order system.

Icon cases of the first type represent an ancient universal construct of the Heavenly House, in which the canopy has from ancient times symbolized paradise or the cosmic home, something already discussed in connection with the iconostasis of



99 Case for two icons, late 17th century. Museum of Pictorial Arts, Archangel.



100 Frame, Florence *c*, 1500–20.



Grigoriy Shumayev. It is encountered long before the Renaissance. As to its place in Russian culture, the period of its greatest extent is the seventeenth century, when it appears to detach itself from the richly decorated canopy structure of 'royal doors'. It was just such a form that Polenov took as the basis of his casing for Repin's image of the *Saviour Not Made by Hands*. This was the form of the 'domestic iconostasis' of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich from the Smolensk Cathedral of the Novodevichiy Convent, which was a casing in which two rows of the tsar's family icons were placed. The upper tier included icons of the *Mother of God* and the *Blessed Aleksey*, belonging to Marfa Ivanovna Sitskaya, mother of Tsar Mikhail Romanov, while the lower contained the icon of the *Mother of God the Protecting Veil* (*Pokrov*) and the *Old Testament Trinity*, relating to the election to the throne of

101 The 'domestic iconostasis' of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, mid-17th century. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

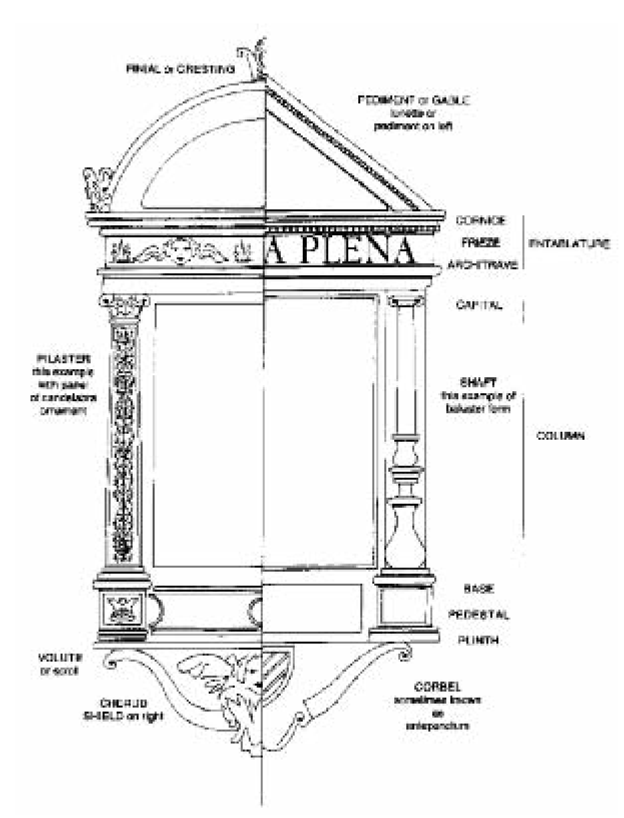


the Romanov family. It followed the example of Renaissance tabernacles, and was one of the most widespread types of familial and personal casing in the second half of the seventeenth century (illus. 99, 100, 101). (In popular culture, indeed, it remained in use throughout the following century.) Rich ornamentation was regularly applied, but the precise form was always subject to change depending on the number of icons involved.

The Russian icon case with elements of the order system show the Western influence on Russian culture and was a departure from the medieval tradition. It is true that in many cases it still contained a traditional rather than modern (i.e. Baroque) icon, but such are the peculiarities of the internal mechanisms of any culture. Even when the stages of development are speeded up, the old is in no hurry to give way to the new. So it was, for example, in the Orthodox Balkan lands, and in the zones of Catholic influence in the Mediterranean area. And here it is that the frame of the Orthodox icon speaks to us about Christian culture's tendency towards unification. In the museum of the Hellenic Institute in Venice there is an early sixteenth-century icon of the *Nativity of Christ* by a Greek master, set in a Renaissance tabernacle of that period (illus. 102). The depiction of the prophets testifies to the icon painter's attempts to adapt a Renaissance frame-as-window to a medieval image. They are placed above columns, and augment the classical order system with a medieval system of representation: just as in late seventeenth-century Muscovite

102 *Nativity of Christ*, early 16th century. Icon Collection of the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Venice.





Russia, the ‘window’ like frame, which should demand true perspective, has been adapted to receive a medieval icon. Moreover, the figures of the biblical prophets on the frame evidently symbolized the ‘religion of the Law’, which was visibly displaced (within the frame) by the ‘religion of Grace’; an analogy to this may be found in the arrangement of many Western European altars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where New Testament figures were presented within a framework that depicted Old Testament subjects.[68]

From the second half of the seventeenth century the Russian icon case employing the ancient order system was subjected to general European aesthetic norms. During the eighteenth it would disappear under the weight of Baroque and Rococo ornament, only to reappear again in the art of Classicism and the Empire style. Russian cases from the end of the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth nearly always seek to present the appearance of an antique temple, reminiscent of Renaissance tabernacles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (illus. 103, 104). Icons corresponding in style were placed within them: sometimes they are copies of Renaissance works, or are works by Russian masters from the Petersburg Academy of Arts, for whom in the classical period beauty meant in particular ‘the correct measure, disposition and interrelation of objects’.[69] From the time of the early excavations at Pompeii (1748), Renaissance architecture was often perceived as a ‘distorted’ idea of ‘genuine’ Greek art. Consequently, not only

103 Russian icon case, *c.* 1800–25. Private collection.

104 Diagram of two types of Renaissance frame with elements of the classical orders.



105 Alexander Ivanov, *Resurrection of Christ with Righteous Figures Soaring Above Empty Tombs*, 1845, a sketch for an image to be placed behind the altar of the church of Christ the Saviour, Moscow. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



106 Yelena Polenova, *The Holy Princes of Yaroslavl: Theodore, David and Constantine*, 1880s. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

Russian iconostases but also icon cases modelled on the façades of ancient temples began to aim to convince viewers of the beauty of the Christian image. Saints in the pictures of Yegorov, Shebuyev, Borovikovsky and other artists are clothed in ancient dress, and sometimes operate within a metaphysical space similar to that of actors in Greek tragedy. For the sake of a more believable narrative they are located within the period of late antiquity, with all the attributes of which Russian academic art was well aware. What Romanticism brings to the construction of the icon case, as far as the order system is concerned, may be called interference from the author's inspiration. In the quest for originality the Romantic artist attempts to discover some unique link between frame and image. Just such meanings are carried by a sketch by Alexander Ivanov for an image intended for the sanctuary of the church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow (1845; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, illus. 105). He has not only thought out a new composition for the *Resurrection*, but also reconciled its form with that of a Renaissance tabernacle, locating a circle enclosing the main part of the scene beneath the 'dome' of the Heavenly Mansion. The framing of the icon by Polenova of the *Holy Princes of Yaroslavl: Theodore, David and Constantine* is distinguished by similar originality (illus. 106). The holy personages are located in a luxuriant picturesque frame, and also within a wooden case with columns and a canopy. The picturesque frame with its stylized, living flowers, and the case with its motif of the gardens of paradise, induce considerable movement in one's gaze. If the wooden frame gives 'shelter' to the Russian saints, the picturesque one by contrast 'pushes them



107 *Vladimir Mother of God*, 1395 or 1408. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.



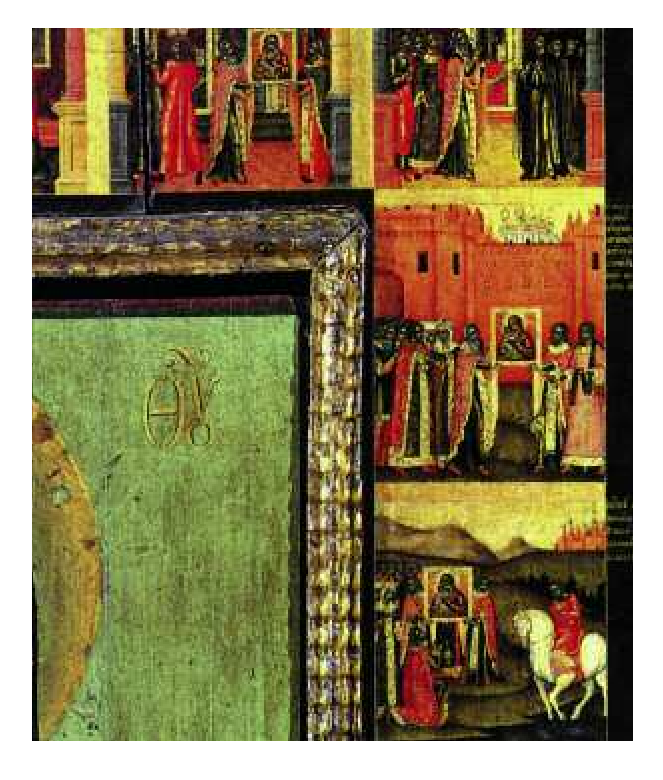
108 *Vladimir Mother of God with Scenes from the Gospels and Holy Figures on the Margins*, *c.* 1514. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.

out' into the world, creating an active effect on surrounding reality.

Finally, we reach the third type of casing, or more precisely the appearance in Russian art of the picture frame, which in the second half of the seventeenth century temporarily and capriciously takes upon itself the sacred function of 'concealing' the holy object, since it abandons it at the first opportunity, overturning it in favour of the secular representation. It is this kind of frame that we see on an icon by the tsar's painter Kirill Ulanov of 'the *Vladimir Mother of God with a Depicted Account of her Miracles* (illus. 109). Its appearance on the horizon of Russian culture was proclaimed in the dissolution of the symbolism of the ark round the icon board, and more broadly in the dissolution of the medieval system of resemblances. This is made clear by a comparison of the icon by Kirill Ulanov with two other well-known copies of the *Vladimir Mother of God*. Thus on the earlier of the Muscovite copies (1395 or 1408), supposedly made by Andrey Rublyov or a master in his circle, what the chronicler calls the 'similarity and measure' of the original are observed (illus. 107). The image of the Mother of God is placed in an ark-type frame, corresponding with the ark of the ancient icon. On the other copy, made around 1514, we notice that its frame, or margins, contains an artistic repetition of the feast days represented on the gold covering ordered by the Metropolitan Fotiy (1410–31, illus. 108). Finally, we observe that in the copy by Kirill Ulanov the frame, with its smaller scenes of the miracles, has *detached* itself from the central representation, and between them is placed a carved and gilded inner frame (illus. 110).



109 Kirill Ulanov, *Vladimir Mother of God with a Depicted Account of her Miracles*, 1717. Pereslavl-Zalessky Art Museum.



110 Detail of framing.



We see almost the same on a Renaissance frame, by an unknown master, showing the Instruments of Christ's Passion, in which is included an image of the *Virgin and Child*, attributed to Lazzaro Bastiani (1430–1512, illus. 111). The 1514 icon and its picturesque frame show that the master, while copying a model, still had at his command the medieval system of likenesses – the chief category of medieval thinking. Since the world was perceived through likenesses, the master, imitating a medieval sacred model, was concerned in the first place about establishing *resemblance*. For that reason the picturesque frame of his copied icon repeats the metal covering on the wonder-working image, observing 'measure' (that is, the dimensions of the icon) and 'likeness' (that is, resemblance) in the process. There is no place in his consciousness for imagination: model and copy are for him inseparable, because to make a likeness means to *identify*, not merely to compare. That was how the mechanism of identification operated in the Middle Ages. A master of the Baroque period such as Kirill Ulanov was governed by different principles, and his category of likeness was intended to present an object more clearly to the understanding. The separation of the picturesque frame from the central element, and the appearance between them of a 'picture frame', is a sign of the fact that the 'depicted account' and the image itself enter into a relationship of mutual commentary and amplification with each other. As earlier, the picturesque frame with its individual scenes of miracles corresponds to the metaphysical beauty of the central countenance. This countenance, however, has been created by an artist who is part way to departing from the medieval canon: the contours of a natural human face are detectable in it.

Therefore the 'smaller frame' between the picturesque frame and the central element – known in the seventeenth century as *flemovannaya ramka*, possibly from the same root as 'Flemish' – indicates that the artistic idea of the absolute beauty of the central countenance had begun to be the possession of the

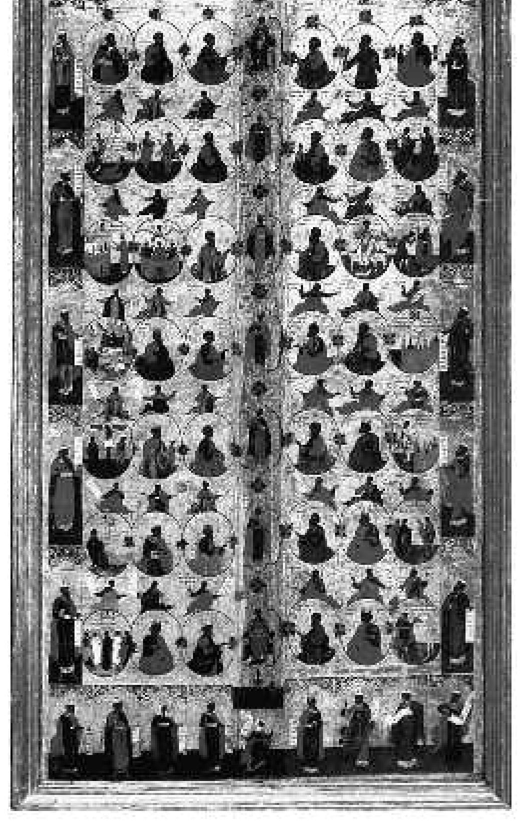
111 Lazzaro Bastiani, *Virgin and Child*, late 15th-century Italian frame. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

artist. This idea assigned the central image to the sphere of *art*. Nowadays it may seem to us modest and ordinary, but three hundred or more years ago even the smallest detail was perceived as being full of meanings and implications. Most likely the inner frame made clear that the narrative scenes round the icon are not merely depicted miracles, but also a valuable framing device, decoration and adornment of the central image. It not only awakened the imagination, emphasizing the real presence of the icon of the *Mother of God*, but also imposed a vision of the artistic excellence attained by the master craftsman. Another testimony to this was a signature on an icon, reflecting the very beginning of the developing concept of authorship in Russian art and the elevation of the artist above his familiar craft status.[70]

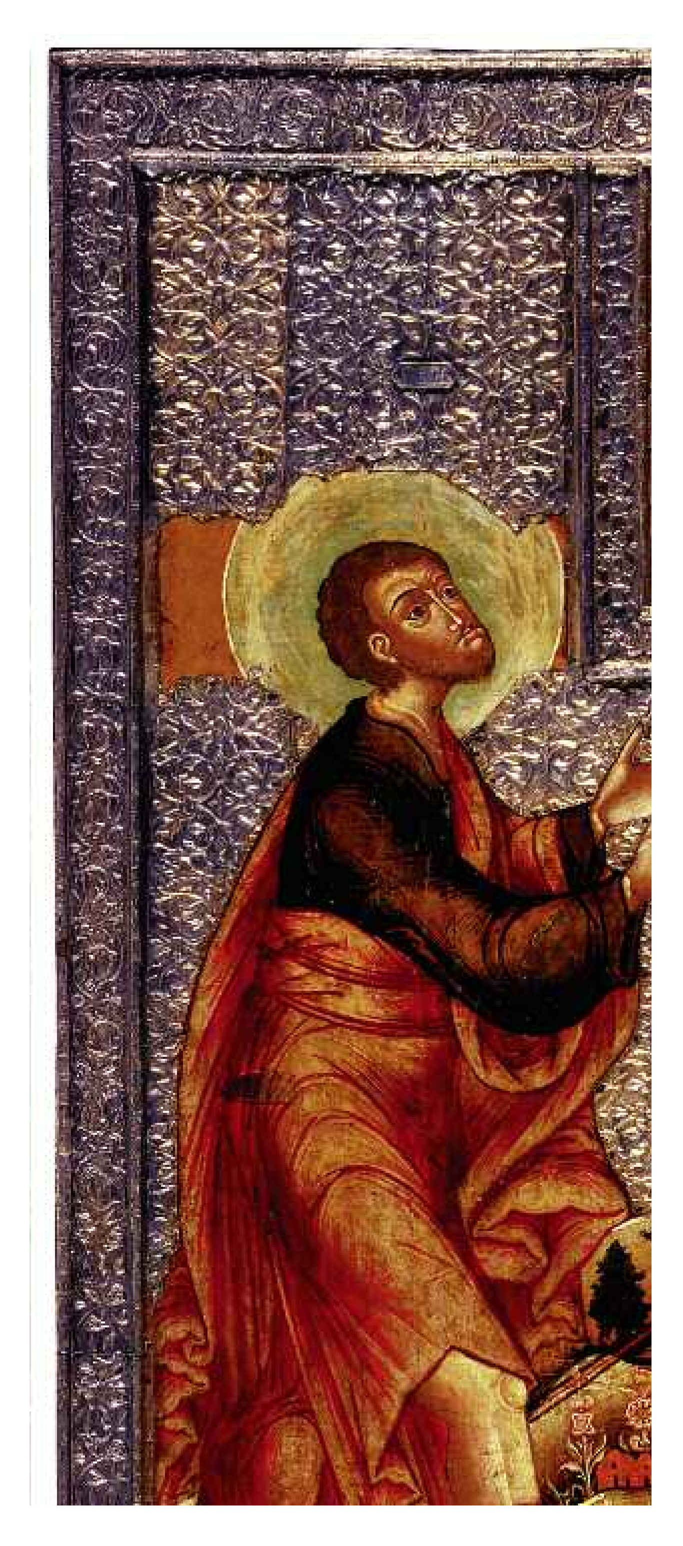
An even more obvious example of the demise of the ark and the appearance of the 'picture frame' is seen in the structure of the icon of the *Tree of Jesse* (*Drevo Iyeseyevo*; second half of seventeenth century; Tretyakov Gallery, illus. 113, 115). A comparison between it and a traditional icon of *SS Prokopiy and John of Ustyug* from the same period shows how the picture frame was replacing the medieval ark (illus. 112, 114). For the time being it constitutes a unified whole together with its board; but it is on the point of separating itself from the board and acquiring the function of the framing of a religious picture or a



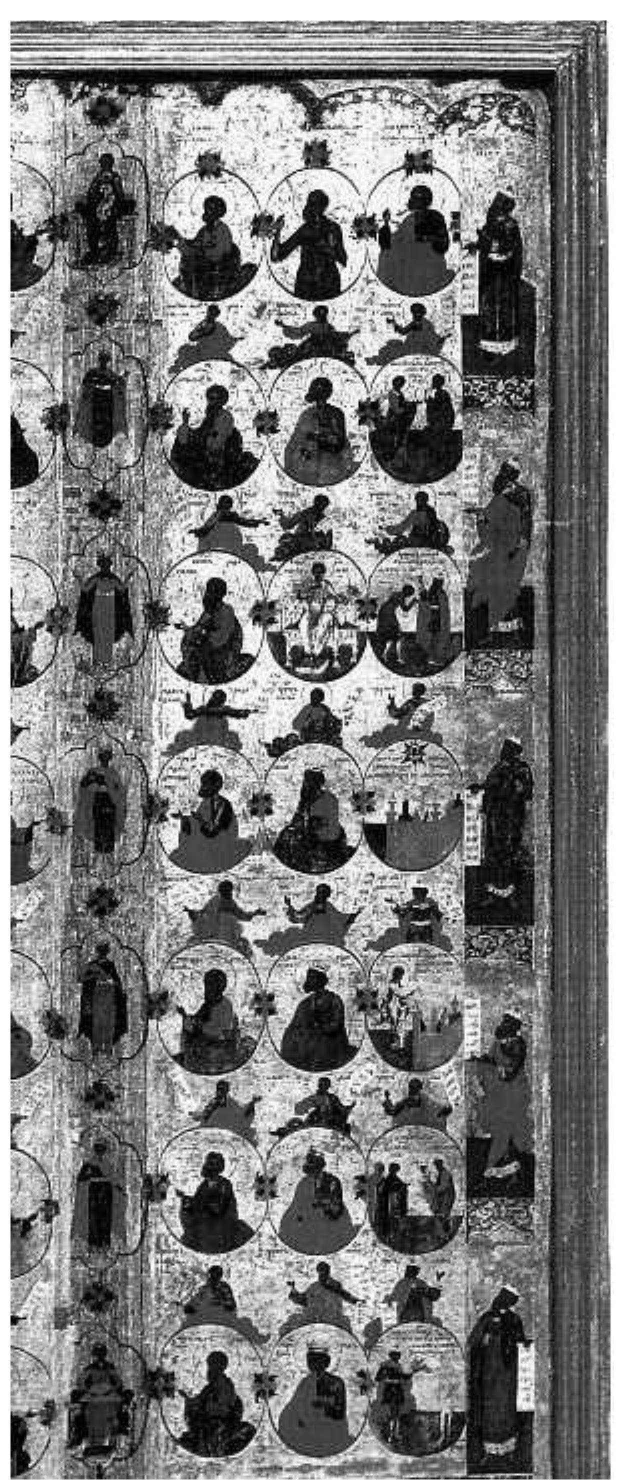
112 *SS Prokopiy and Ioann of Ustyug*, *c.* 1650–1700. State Open-air Museum of Architectural History and Art 'Kolomenskoye', Moscow.



113 *Tree of Jesse* (Genealogy of Jesus Christ), *c.* 1650–1700. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



114 Detail from ark of *SS Prokopiy and Ioann of Ustyug*.



115 Detail of the frame of the *Tree of Jesse*.

secular portrait on canvas.[71] A characteristic example is the picture titled the *Glorification of the Cross with SS Constantine and Helena, Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich, Tsaritsa Mariya Ilyinichna and Patriarch Nikon* (second half of seventeenth century, illus. 92). Until 1917 the picture was at the Novodevichiy Convent, and it is quite possible that it was painted by Ivan Saltanov in fulfilment of one of the commissions discussed above. In this connection there is every reason to affirm that a structure like this was one of the early kinds of picture frame in Russian art. Ivan Zabelin commented pertinently that in the 'bed chambers' of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich:

> there normally hung pictures, *parsuny*, *persony*, that is to say portraits, and 'Frankish leaves' [prints] in 'unglazed frames'. The content of the pictures was subordinated to the same dominant edificatory religious character of the painting . . . The subjects represented were mostly taken from Old Testament biblical history and had the general title of 'parables'. Irrespective of that, these pictures were quite sharply differentiated from icons, since they were done in a painterly style by foreign artists living in Moscow at the invitation of the Tsar.[72]

The Dutch artists Pieter Dettersohn and Daniel Wuchters and the Poles Stanisław Lopucki and Wasili Poznański are only the best-known painters who came to Moscow in the middle of the seventeenth century and certainly had a huge influence on the appearance of the Western European picture and frame in Russia.[73] Thus even at the time of Peter the Great, paintings, and icons in picture frames, had become a normal phenomenon in the furnishing of palace interiors. In the hallway of the Petrine palace at Preobrazhenskoye, near Moscow, for example, according to documentary evidence there was 'a great image of the most holy Mother of God painted on white cloth framed in black . . . the image of the Saviour on copper behind mica framed in black . . . an image of the Mother of God on paper framed in black'. In the dining room were 'an image of the Saviour on cloth in an ancient gilded frame . . . a framed image of the most holy Mother of God on fine cloth'. There were also secular pictures hanging



116 Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*, 1457, sketch for an altarpiece. Archivio di Stato, Florence.

in frames: 'two pictures in black frames on paper, depicting galleys', 'two pictures in black frames depicting ships'.[74] During the Renaissance frames were sometimes designed, decorated and gilded by the most eminent artists and sculptors. The documents tell us that the frame for Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* (*c.* 1485; Louvre, Paris) had been made by the sculptor Giacomo del Maino before the artist had begun his work; but it was Leonardo himself who had to gild the frame.[75] Botticelli, Filippo Lippi and Dürer designed frames for their pictures (illus. 116).[76] As was demonstrated earlier, the painters employed by Tsar Aleksey undertook the same tasks, underlining the important changes in culture connected with the separation of the frame from the image and their particular regard for its aesthetic and symbolic side.

Thus the inner frame on the icon of the *Tree of Jesse* (as also on Kirill Ulanov's icon) posed the problem of aesthetic perception, which had been conditioned by the change in status of art itself. This casing frame (or ark frame) no longer presupposed the partial covering over of the paintwork by a sheet of metal, as we see on the icon of *SS Prokopiy and John of Ustyug*, but 'demanded' that the icon should be perceived both as the target of prayer and as a splendid object. And it is just this dualism that admitted the subjectivity of the potential viewer. Unlike the medieval ark, the inner frame forced one's gaze to embrace the icon as a whole, which presupposed its evaluation. Therefore, on the path from the Middle Ages to Romanticism it is the connecting link between the age of medieval aesthetics and the art of modern times. This inner frame clearly showed that 'beauty' was gradually changing from a medieval attribute of an abstract world view into beauty as a self-sufficient aesthetic category.

In the same process the 'pictorial frame' set the medieval icon face to face with the surrounding world, with poetry, philosophy and the whole of the worldly culture that was actively developing in the complex processes of secularization and the conflicts of real life. Through attachment to the Renaissance ideal of beauty, the inner frame associated Russian culture with the values of the classical heritage. It also pointed to a new understanding of creativity and the value of feelings. With the 'pictorial frame' the traditional icon strove in the direction of uniqueness. With it too the meaning of the *icon as art* was becoming clear. As something new and unusual, the pictorial frame was in its way an embellishment of the traditional icon. Hence it was meant to evoke astonishment and, even more, pleasure from contemplation of the image.

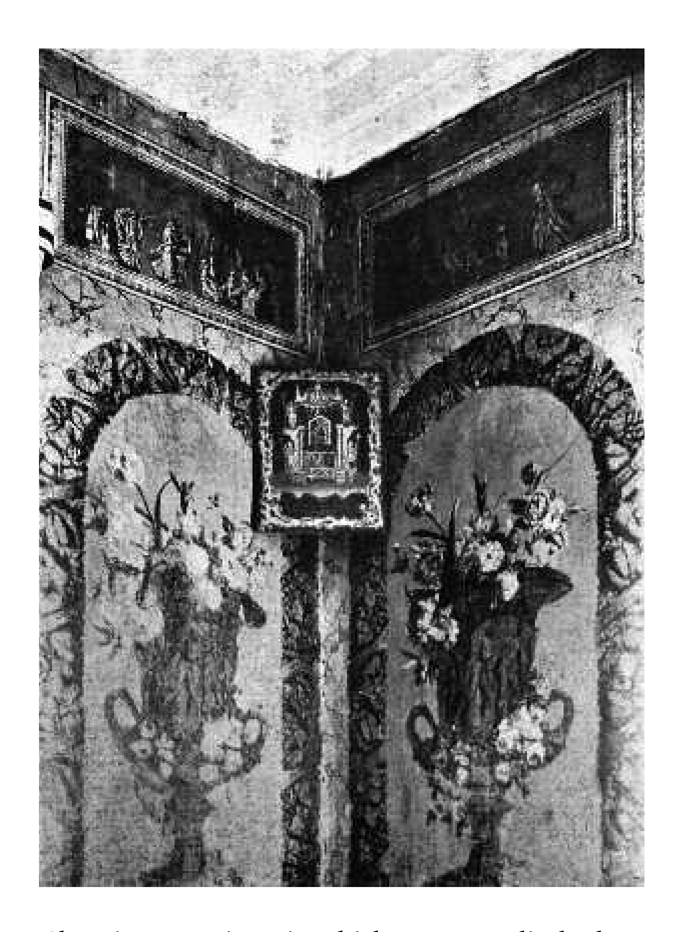
In medieval aesthetics we note 'an extremely functionalistic understanding of art, whereby the elements giving pleasure do not belong to the specifically artistic idea'.[77] In Renaissance and Baroque art theory these elements have come to have very great significance. They are part of the artistic purpose and reveal themselves through the power of the creative imagination. In this sense a pictorial frame on a canonical icon moves subjectivity and emotionality into the foreground for the first time. Gradually, the self-awareness of both the artist and of the viewer makes itself evident. The inner frame has shown that the medieval canonical representation has not been able to satisfy people: it refuses them the possibility of cognition. For that reason if the medieval casing presupposed a knowledge of beauty as the eternal essence of things, then the pictorial frame went out in search of it: it attempted to give elucidation to that which is unseen. And it is just in this field of relations

between the medieval icon and the pictorial frame that the latter convinces us that very soon the religious image will be created with the Renaissance 'window' frame taken into account – something that allows the gaze to take it in as a totality and thus to make an evaluation of it. The inner frame will 'subordinate' the representation to the laws of optics and the gaze of the spectator.

From this transitional point the 'pictorial frame' senses itself to be in full 'authority' both in the space of a Russian church and in a palace. As Catherine the Great noted, the interior of a religious building was 'often hard to distinguish from a ballroom'.[78] This is no accident: the picture frame might sometimes get away from church symbolism, and in the late Baroque could even go over onto the territory of walls and ceiling, but Rococo ornament knew no obstacles. Rastrelli used it both for adorning the icons of the church of the Resurrection in Tsarskoye Selo, and equally for the adornment of walls, furniture and decorative panels in the palaces. A famous court carver, Dunker, followed his designs in making the frames for the church of the Resurrection. They were valued so highly as works of art that when fire broke out in 1820 and 1863 they 'were taken with haste out of the walls and saved'.[79] This comment by Alexander Benua once again emphasizes that in the period of the 'Elizabethan' Baroque religious pictures were set into walls in the same way as decorative panels.

Thus having first destroyed the medieval ark, or having abandoned it to the zone where 'Old Ritualist' faith and strictness ruled, the 'Baroque inner frame' could perfectly well turn up in the space of the icon itself. Just such an icon may be seen on an old photograph of the interior of one of the Razumovsky family's palaces in the Chernigov province, in which Empress Elizabeth often used to stay 'on the road to Kiev' (illus. 117).[80] The inner frame, painted onto the icon, 'dissolved' the image into the general decor of the wall, and also into that sensuous feeling of pleasure towards which the whole furnishing of the palace was orientated. Such icons had clearly moved away from the concept of contemplation. In the process of prayer the soul was elevated by the experience of beauty and immersed itself ever more deeply in the contemplated image. The inner frame enhanced the joy received from the encounter with the icon.

A quite different significance is borne by the frame of the *Ascent to Heaven of the Holy Tsaritsa Alexandra* (1845) by Karl Bryullov (illus. 118). The



117 Icon and wall painting in Razumovsky Palace, Chernigov province, mid-18th century.



painting was commissioned by the officers of the Preobrazhensky regiment for a chapel in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoye Selo, set up in the room where the Princess Alexandra Nikolayevna had died at nineteen years old. The artist has given to the saint the facial features of the grand princess. After being mounted in a heavy silver frame, like the casing or metal cover of an icon, the prayer portrait image was presented to Emperor Nicholas I and placed on the lectern of the prayer room.

This picture and its frame show obvious features of Romanticism. On the one hand the frame corresponds with the perspectival drawing of the picture; on the other it is close to being an icon case, thanks to its Christian symbolism. At the top centre is located the symbol of God the Father – a three-pointed nimbus with rays coming out of it and carrying the abbreviated word for 'God'.[81] In the deeper part of the frame the words of a prayer seem to issue forth from the mouth of the holy Alexandra, the subject of the picture. So the frame conveys a quiet conversation with God. This is a 'frame as prayer', an address to God begging for mercy and salvation. At the same time it presents a metaphysical liminal space into which the saint's soul is ascending. For that reason the frame is adorned with stars, and its gilding is associated with the gold of an icon.

We may detect sincere religious feelings in the picture, and a sense of the frame timidly – as yet – striving in the direction of the surrounding reality. But they are predicated by the same mission as the Romantic artist feels within himself. After all, he is an agent of the world's evolution, and his picture potentially contains an idea dictating certain meanings to this world. This is all the more evident if the world itself can be viewed, following Schelling, as a work of art, and the artist as one who expresses absolute and objective truth. For that reason the game played out between picture and frame that we observe in the first half of the nineteenth century will make itself fully apparent at the last stage of the development of the Romantic aesthetic, that is to say the time of *stil' modern*.

The basic meaning of the sketch of a frame decorated with stylized lilies by Andrey Mamontov is the transformation of the world under the banner of sublimity (illus. 119, 120). The same meaning is also present in the icon frame by Polenova representing the canonized Russian princes (illus. 106), and also essentially in all the framings in the Abramtsevo church, that temple to the religion of





opposite: 118 Karl Bryullov, *Ascent to Heaven of the Holy Tsaritsa Alexandra*, 1845. State Open-air Museum of Art and Architecture, Tsarskoye Selo.

119–120 Andrey Mamontov, designs for framing, 1899. State Open-air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramtsevo', Moscow province.

beauty in which the religious world of ornament as praise of God ('Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord', Psalms 150:6) was complemented by the natural philosophical mysticism of the Renaissance, by German Romanticism and by the ideas of Vladimir Solovyov. The very beauty of art itself was concentrated in the space of the iconic and pictorial frame – art that could transform the external world and whose beauty wholly captivated it in both the Romantic and the absolute sense. Consequently, that frame by Mamontov could display ambivalence, being able to contain either a religious image or a secular picture. The world depicted on the icons and paintings of a Vasnetsov or a Nesterov appeared essentially one and the same: it was seen in an eschatological perspective, that is, the same as it appeared to Vladimir Solovyov at the end of time – translucent and transfigured.[82]

Lilies, so popular a flower in Art Nouveau, appeared on frames equally altered and transfigured. The aura of their new meanings was already observed by V. N. Veselovsky: 'The rose and the lily . . . have not as yet faded, and as before serve the same symbolic goals as they had expressed over the centuries. The means remained; the content of the symbol had become something other, more abstract, personal, nervous, less concentrated.'[83] Thus if the flowers in Rastrelli's Rococo frames are rather an external and elegant decoration, on the Abramtsevo frames and cases they are one of the chief ways in which poetic motifs are brought into the image. In the space between representation and human being the stylized flowers on the frames perform a complex theurgic task: they draw the eye into the image in a manner that is sensitive to aesthetics and to creativity.

This 'theurgic task' of the frame will become more evident if we examine the decoration of the Abramtsevo church from the point of view of the display of icons as works of art. Russian church decoration of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to embody the Christian view of the world, but only in the language of the canons of academic art. From the point of view of these canons the forms of the traditional icon were declared 'naive' and 'clumsy' even by those artists who created the Abramtsevo church, specifically Vasnetsov, Polenov and Repin. But at the same time certain traditional icons were included in the iconostasis as monuments of the national religious 'spirit' and of popular creativity. On this level the Abramtsevo iconostasis foreshadowed the arrival at the beginning of the twentieth century of a new aesthetic and religious (theurgic) way of exhibiting Old Russian icons, which in the conditions of Romantic aesthetics and new advances in art history began to be regarded as works of free, unfettered art.

The Museum

We have become used to seeing icons in a museum, or a church, a shop, or a private house. In each, however, one's perception of them is different. This happens because the very way in which the icon itself is displayed changes, something that also helps one concentrate on one or another aspect of the object of representation. The whole history of the framing of the Old Russian icon tells us that it was only from the start of the twentieth century that it began to be perceived as a 'masterpiece', that is as a product of independent artistic creation. Before that it fulfilled a quite different role in the culture. The collection and safe keeping of ancient

icons started in Russia in the 'Old Ritualist' circles as far back as the second half of the seventeenth century, while its full flowering came in the middle and second half of the nineteenth. However for an Old Ritualist, looking at it from a truly religious perspective, the icon was not a work of art, but something infinitely higher. Its artistic side was valued to the extent that it called forth religious feeling and brought one closer to God. An exclusively aesthetic perception of the medieval icon, from the Old Ritualist point of view, could even be seen as blasphemous. Icon collecting, as it developed in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, whether privately or for a museum, also failed to regard the ancient icon as a work of art, only as an object from the popular way of life, capable of informing the archaeologist about the history of the people. In its turn, academic artistic opinion in the nineteenth century considered old icons to be clumsy works: from the moment that academic theory began to distinguish between antique, medieval and contemporary architecture, ancient architecture itself, and correspondingly the icon too, were thought of as 'deprived of rights'. This was the case in the eighteenth century. The situation, however, changed radically in the context of Russian theurgic aesthetics at the beginning of the twentieth century. After 1905 collectors of a new generation, including the artist Ilya Ostroukhov (1858–1929) and the Old Ritualist financier Stepan Ryabushinsky (1874–1943), applied new methods of restoration, allowing the authentic early painting to be uncovered. They also became not only the first collectors of ancient icons as *masterpieces*, but the main propagandists for them. The new generation of scholars, collectors, artists, writers and philosophers saw in the ancient icon nothing less than 'the theurgic work of art', the ideal beauty of which was capable of renewing the world.

It was just such an understanding of the Old Russian icon that was reflected in the famous exhibition called 'The Novgorod Icon Hall', designed by the architect Aleksey Shchusev (1873–1949) in 1914 at Emperor Alexander III's Russian Museum in St Petersburg (illus. 121). As was discussed above, a visitor to Abramtsevo could fully appreciate the country estate *church as museum*, in which were gathered together works by famous artists and items of folk art and craft. Visitors at Shchusev's exhibition were instead invited to perceive the *museum as church*, a space that brought together the features of medieval church decoration, an Old Ritualist prayer room and an archaeological museum. A comparison of their rhetoric and meanings illuminates aspects of both how icons were displayed in the age of *stil' modern* and also the nature of contemporary museums.

If the contemporary museum exhibition is based upon a well-defined scholarly conception, by contrast the decoration of a medieval church was based on the idea of the Christian cosmos. The display of icons in a church embodied the Christian picture of the world, in which only the richly meaningful connection of the icons with its other elements, such as wall paintings and mosaics, objects for liturgical use and vestments for the clergy, was symbolically on display. The artistic side of the icon had only a secondary significance. It was part of that visual symbolic field that also determined a person's 'logic of seeing'. Icons made him or her see the world in this way. In this sense *beauty*, not as a means for cognition of the world, but as a metaphysical property, was a concomitant both of the artistic space of the church and also of



121 Novgorod Icon Hall, 1914, an exhibition of icons in the Russian Museum of Emperor Alexander III, designed by Aleksey Shchusev, St Petersburg.



the artistic form of the Old Russian icon. The icon's beauty could only be transcendental, and was perceived only in the aspect of the religious picture of the world as a property of sacred space. Within a church the meaningful centre of this space was the iconostasis, that picture of paradise and of the economy of salvation that we discussed earlier. Meanwhile, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Old Russian icon migrates from the space of the official church into the space of the Old Ritualist prayer room, in which the meaning and the strict symbolism of the iconostasis are destroyed. The liturgy is not celebrated in it, and consequently the iconostasis no longer serves as the 'theatrical' stage on which the sacred action would be played out from century to century, not only by the personages depicted, but also by live priests, deacons and choristers. In a prayer room the iconostasis turns into a solid icon wall with the 'royal doors' closed, in correspondence with the rules of Old Ritualist devotion. Hence the viewer's whole attention was directed not at the link between the iconostasis and the liturgy and elements of the church decoration, but rather at the icon itself. Its significance in the process of meditation increased considerably. Correspondingly, there is also a heightening of the significance of its framing: the case frame, the precision of the image and the actual place of its display.

In the Old Ritualist prayer room an ancient icon was taken as a perfected revelation, communicated to the Old Believer alone through a language of symbols, letters and words. For the Old Believer what was important was not so much the authentic ancient paintwork as the medieval canon, that is to say ancient art as 'knowledge of the rules of the craft', which a priori had an objective significance.

Fedor Buslayev (1818–1897) found a special term for it: 'church art'. In the middle of the nineteenth century this scholar wrote that the Old Ritualists

> know by name the best masters of Stroganov and Novgorod art, and will spare no expense in obtaining icons by some well-known master or other, and, reverencing it as if it were a holy relic, they can at the same time also discourse on its artistic merits, to the extent that their technical and archaeological remarks could provide valuable material for the history of Russian church art.

Further on we read:

> I have chanced to be in many of the Moscow prayer rooms, and have always carried away from them the most joyous impression, inspired by that freshness of artistic enthusiasm with which their honourable owners relate to the treasures they have collected. They take down icons from their places on the wall so as the better to examine all the details of their execution or to make out the ancient inscription.[84]

Within the limits of Old Ritualist culture, however, the Old Believers' understanding of the 'art' of the icon, which so excited Buslayev, was not the chief thing. Far more important for the Old Believer was a clear sign system proper to the ancient image: a clearly defined countenance or an 'ancient inscription' that it was essential to be able to read. For that reason the *real* artistic form of the ancient icon was always being corrected by the Old Ritualists. It was often even distorted according to ideas that had taken shape. For the Old Ritualists it was more important to apply their knowledge of the sacred rules of the craft, which permitted them to 'discover' the artistic form as transcendental object and protect it from the surrounding world. This is shown by a special type of framing of an ancient icon that



122 *Annunciation*, 16th century, an Old Ritualist 'inserted' icon. Private collection, Moscow.



Old Believer icon-makers would call 'insertion'. The paint surface of an ancient icon would be partially cleared and repainted with fresh pigments so that the countenance, background and inscriptions might acquire the shape that the Old Believers found so significant. To preserve it better, and to give back to the icon its traditional form, the ancient representation would be inserted into another board that then played the part of a frame, or more precisely of a *new ark* for the ancient icon. This construction was not intended to be an instrument of cognition, like a Renaissance 'window' frame, but remained a medieval device for preserving the sacred countenance. A sixteenth-century icon of the *Annunciation* is a typical Old Ritualist 'insertion' of an ancient image into a new board (illus. 122). In the nineteenth century the whole icon, including the margins, was painted over with new pigments. Nowadays, cleared of later accretions by a restorer, it graphically displays the function of a new frame in the preservation of a holy object (illus. 123).

In an analogous way, the prayer room of an Old Ritualist was also a secluded space, concealed from the eyes of outsiders, for which a special place was set aside in a private house. As Buslayev also observed, the prayer room as a rule occupied a location far away from the front door. Sometimes it would be entered via the back porch; often it would be beside the bedroom or the storeroom where money and valuables were kept. Whenever the prayer room served as a place for collective

123 Detail of framing case.

worship, it would be separated from the living quarters by a hallway. The whole space would be filled with icons:

> The prayer room itself, from around 3–4 feet above the floor right up to the very ceiling, is entirely covered with icons, usually on three sides so that during prayer one can stand with one's back to the wall that does not have any. A multitude of lamps and candles glow in front of the icons.[85]

This impressive icon exhibition undoubtedly corresponded with the tastes of the householder, but basically it embodied the concept of the traditional icon as prayer image, whose beauty was revealed only in the ritual process.

From the middle of the nineteenth century into the second half, the period when Old Ritualist collecting most flourished, the ancient icon finally entered into the museum, where it embarked on a quite different life. The space of a museum exhibition is fundamentally unlike that of a church or prayer room. Within it the icon, like other ancient art objects, such as a miniature, medal, engraving, portrait and wooden sculpture, loses its primary functions and ruptures its links with its previous framing. Nonetheless, they acquire additional meanings, since they turn into 'monuments', evoking 'images of the past' in the spectator's consciousness. For that reason it has always been easy to juxtapose genuine works with copies or models of them, illustrated by verbal texts, figures and index numbers in glass cases, since they are all merely witnesses to reality, to some kind of 'history'. Such is the sign system of any museum. But in so far as the space of a museum exhibition is dependent in its arrangement on the system of knowledge dominant at a particular period, the exhibits within it are constantly being recombined, each time forming a specific system of conventions, in which scholarly discoveries often stand cheek by jowl with the mythologemes of cultural history.

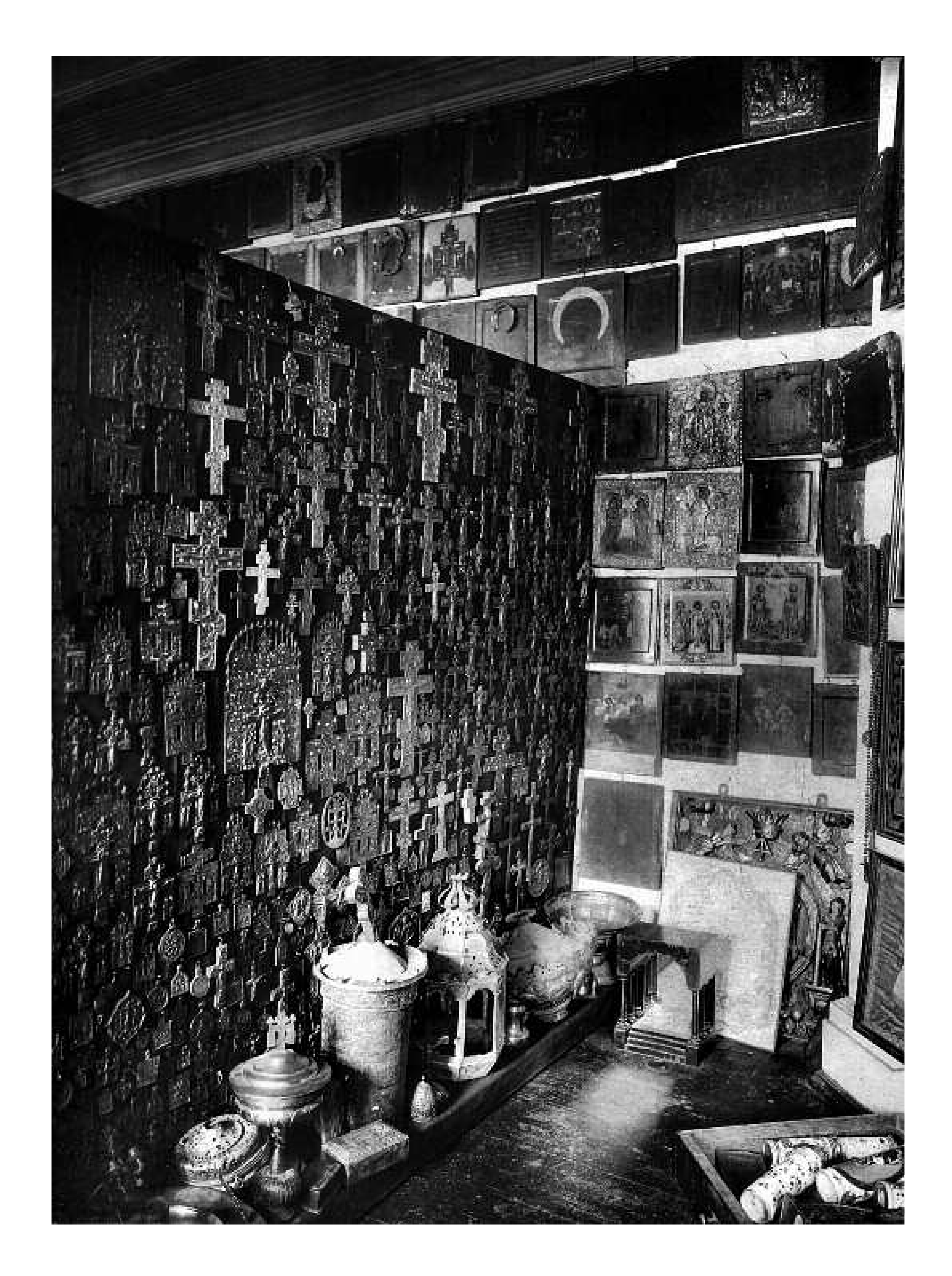
The exhibiting of a private collection of rarities in the middle of the nineteenth century was characterized more by an emotional re-experiencing of ancient times than a well-thought-through plan for studying them. The objects within it were united by the special passion of the collector of antiquities, who gathered about him an 'archaeological museum' of the kind that originated in the European Chamber of Curiosities in the sixteenth century, and was in turn derived from the famous cabinet of rarities (1570–75) of Duke Francesco I of Tuscany at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, designed by Vasari. 'Chambers of Curiosities' were inspired by the Renaissance pattern of thinking, and in the age of Renaissance and Baroque humanism and of the Enlightenment not only reflected the universal capabilities of human cognition, but the very order of the surrounding world.[86] In Russia they do not appear until the eighteenth century, when the Russian upper class started to make domestic arrangements along European lines. In the Chamber of Curiosities of 1750 at his house on the Fontanka, St Petersburg, for example, Pyotr Borisovich Sheremetev kept paintings alongside all kinds of oddities and remarkable things such as fossils.[87] Subsequently, these universal exhibitions, organized like scientific compendia, would be broken up: they would be separated out into natural history collections, picture galleries, and also 'cabinets of the arts' with their indiscriminate gatherings of ancient artworks.



In the nineteenth century one such cabinet was owned by Count Sergey Stroganov (1794–1882). According to Buslayev's memoirs, the count's cabinet in his detached house by the Neva in St Petersburg was in the shape of an elongated room, all the walls of which, including the spaces between the windows, were occupied by cupboards with bookshelves and 'various rarities in sliding drawers', including his collections of Greek, Roman and Byzantine coins. On top of the cupboards there stood precious decorative sculptures, most notably a gold vase by Benvenuto Cellini, while above them hung pictures by old Italian and Flemish masters. It was in this environment that icons of the Stroganov school from Old Ritualist collections also had a place. The count had started acquiring them as early as the 1840s; apart from their belonging to the history of Christian antiquities, they reminded the count of his illustrious forebears, the renowned owners of icon-painting workshops.[88] The 'cabinet of the arts' belonging to the famous artist and restorer Nikolay Podklyuchnikov (1813–1877) was an analogous type of setting: in one of his paintings he depicted himself in the gallery, where an icon (possibly painted by him) is to be seen amid the ancient pictures and the attributes of an artist – a female mannequin and 'antiques' (illus. 124). What is more the icon stands on an easel, and in that way demonstrates that it is an 'object of art'.

Old icons were regarded somewhat differently in public and private collections of national rarities, where they came under the general umbrella of the 'ancient' national way of life. These collections were still innocent of scholarly classification: they merely created an image of 'primitive' or 'ancient' civilizations and cultures. In the middle and second half of the nineteenth century the private collections

124 Nikolay Podklyuchnikov, *A Cabinet of the Arts*, *c.* 1860. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.



125 Fyodor Plyushkin's 'antiquities store', *c.* 1900.

of Pavel Korobanov (1767–1851), Mikhail Pogodin (1800–1911) and Fyodor Plyushkin (1837–1911) were outstanding. The special galleries of the Korobanov house in Moscow, where the famous Pogodin antiquities collection was housed, were totally inundated with Russian antiques. Here one might encounter anything: 'Scythian' accoutrements and cloth, dishes and medals, portraits and wooden sculptures, manuscripts and old printed books, icons and portraits. All this was hung on the walls, kept in cupboards, placed on tables or chests of drawers.[89] Even more curious was Plyushkin's collection, in which numerous icons of different periods jostled not only with objects of everyday life, including costume, playing cards and 'freaks of nature', but also with numismatic and Masonic collections that were considered the best in Russia (illus. 125).[90] Here, judging by old photographs, the ecclesiastical antiquities were given a special room, in which painted icons found themselves next to utensils in boxes and an impressive glass case full of small cast copper images and crosses. Their placement did not imply any scholarly system, nor any close scrutiny of intended aesthetic satisfaction. It was really an 'iconic treasure house', an 'antiquities store' in which the assembled objects were only signs of the 'cultural past' and of the cultural mythologeme that reigned at a given period. They have a quantitative dimension, but no scholarly elucidation.

Meanwhile the moment was coming when the collection of cultural monuments, including icons, would be determined by scholarly information. Formerly, objects had to have the attraction of an 'ancient' appearance in order to get into a collection; now it became their provenance and significance for clarifying the history of Russian culture that counted. The former system of conventions retreated into the background as museum collections appeared that demanded a different order of allocating objects. The creation of public museums throughout Europe gave much popular pleasure, and this was also the case in Russia. This affected not only the national museums in the capitals, but also numerous city museums and those attached to various institutions. Their general aim was the enlightenment of the people and the creation of some great 'Image of History': pictures of a sequential development of the artistic life of the country and of its specific place among the other nations. If today museums are associated with the preservation of things valuable within the culture, then at the moment of their inception they were destined to formulate the national sense of selfhood, which found its reflection in the creation of great exhibitions, in their way a visual equivalent of the multi-volume scholarly works on history and archaeology. We should remember that national museums were opening one after another all over Europe: the Louvre in Paris opened in 1793, what was later to become the Museo del Prado in Madrid in 1820, the National Gallery in London in 1824, and the British Museum in 1852. The Altes Museum was founded in Berlin in 1830. And in all these museums art became not only the property of the whole people, but also the object of scholarly analysis. It became involved with politics, too, since it had to respond to the national myth about the past with its heroes and geniuses, its triumphant victories and its faith in historical progress. At the same time the museums participated in the creation of this past, questioning historical evidence in a new way and taking over, essentially, the 'sacred' functions of defining the goal and meaning of

human history. In an age when religious preconceptions were in crisis, the museum even began to usurp the role of the sacred building, which was frequently reflected in the very architecture of the museum itself. Classical forms of the ancient temple or medieval basilica turned it into a sort of cult structure, all the more obviously so since museums were built, as a rule, on the most visible sites, where once cathedrals would have been erected. And if romantics saw in the museum a temple of art, then positivists, democrats and liberals viewed it as a temple of learning, throughout which one might sense the dominance of scholarly positivism.

Thus the ancient icons in the historical-archaeological exhibition held at the Historical Museum in Moscow, designed by the architect Vladimir Shervud in 1875–81 (almost at the same time as the Abramtsevo church), began to be understood precisely as monuments of national history and of the everyday religious life of the people. They took their place in the inflexible chronological ordering of a newly conceptualized Russian history, since the whole artistic space of this exhibition, grandiose for its time, was subjected to the idea of the sequential evolution of the artistic historical process. Even the decoration of individual halls was modified according to changes of art-historical epoch, in order to persuade the spectators that they were not confronting objects for aesthetic enjoyment, but for scholarly research. As curious 'museum landscapes', the decoration around the monuments of art and culture created not just a specific historic context, but also a particular museum 'aura', that 'historical framing' that could have such an effect upon the process of the spectator's perception.

Framing constructions, labels, texts, signs, all kinds of guidebooks and catalogues spoke of the same power of evolutionary positivism. Thus the way in which the museum framed a sixteenth-century travelling iconostasis (now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) was essentially a rationalistic commentary on the work. Its medieval folding structure was cut up into its individual hinged panels, on which attention was necessarily concentrated, and each was given an explanation: underneath each panel there was a small brass label giving the name of its subject. The dominance of the natural sciences at that time brought close to one another the labelling of archaeological and natural scientific showcases. The icon would have a glassed-in showcase distantly reminiscent of an icon casing. But if the latter was meant for the preservation and safe keeping of a holy object, the museum showcase aimed at the preservation of a national cultural monument. The fact that it was the preservative function of a museum showcase that primarily concerned learned archaeologists is illustrated by a letter sent by Nikodim Kondakov to Pyotr Neradovsky (1844–1925), Director of the Russian Museum:

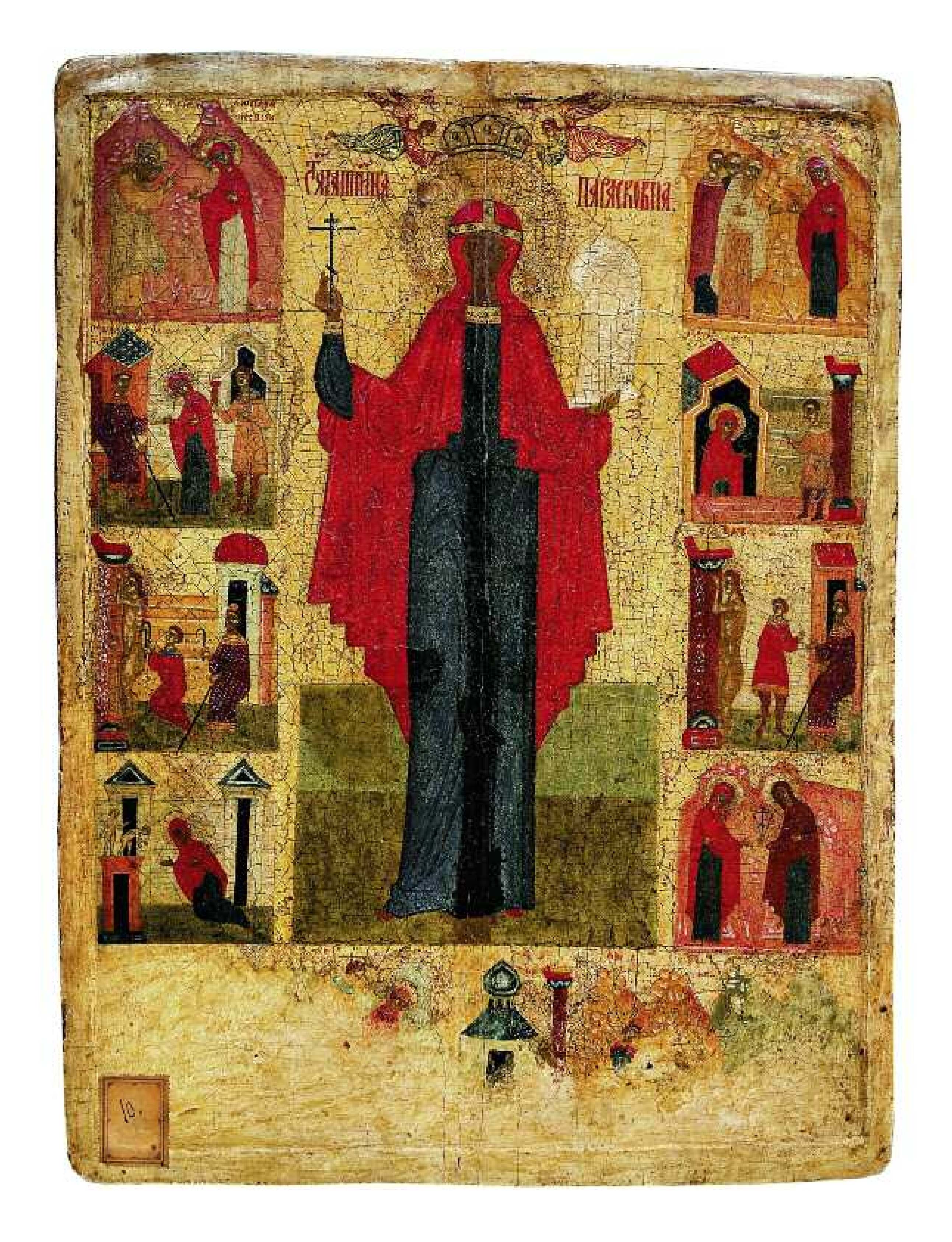
> I merely hasten to give you one piece of advice on the problem of the conservation of icons . . . The point is that, as I have observed, to keep icons in any kind of showcase lying flat is harmful and even dangerous for them. Lying flat, the icons are soon covered with dust. The dust dries out, then gets damp; cracks appear in the icons, the dust gets into them, an icon . . . is ruined. I know of an instance (in the Rumyantsev Museum) when if I remember right dozens of icons were damaged in this way. For that reason I consider that the one proper way of conserving icons is to keep them hanging in an upright

> position – best of all, of course, in glass cases on the wall. As if on purpose, you have your best icons lying in showcases under windows. Just the same has been done in the Historical Museum in Moscow.[91]

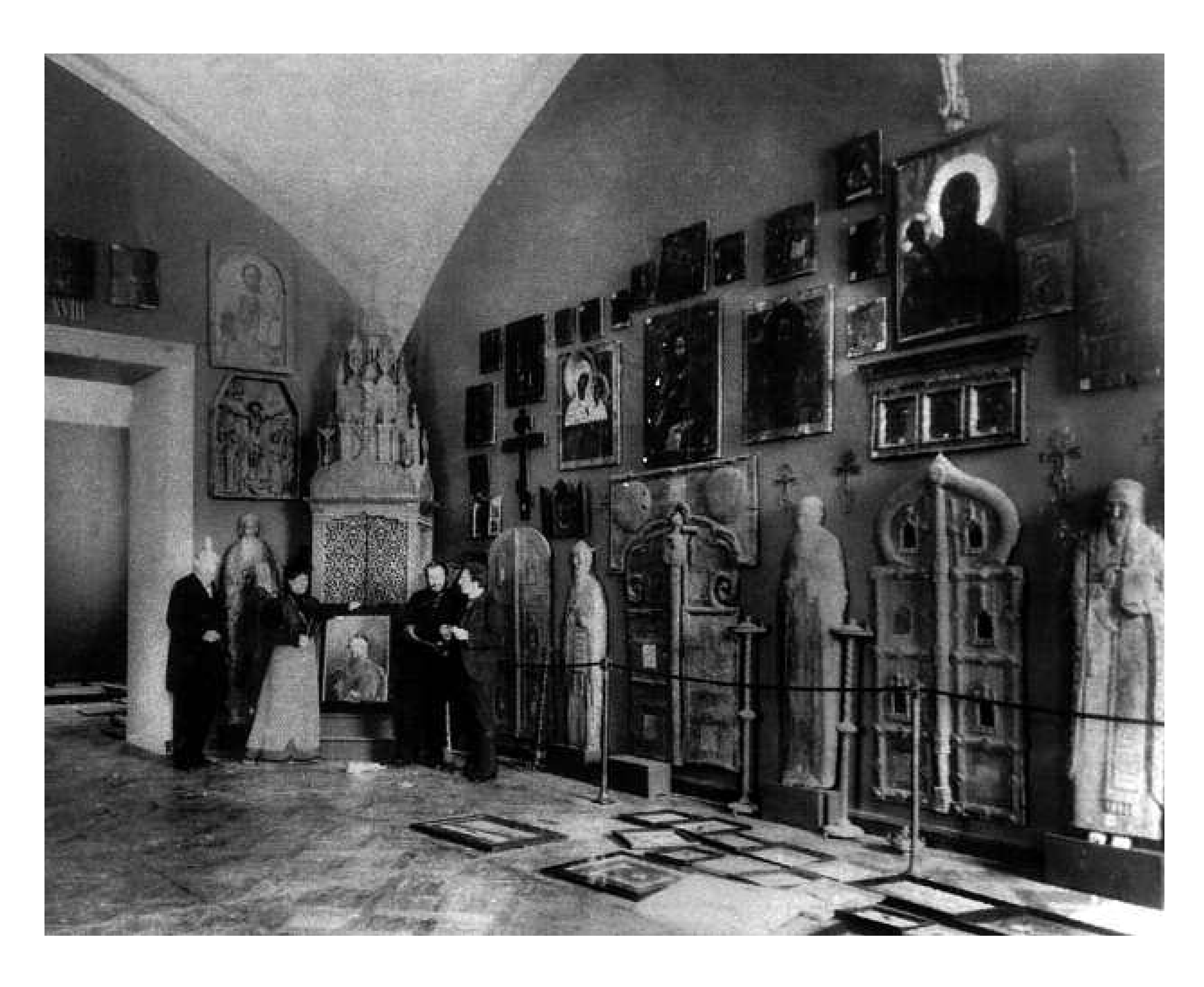
In other words, not only the architecture of a museum building, but also its internal space with its painted decor, windows, barriers, pedestals and architectural niches for the most significant and valuable exhibits were assimilated to its sacred furnishing of a religious structure. The aesthetic of such an exhibition was inspired by the nineteenth-century scholarly theory of positivism with its principles of historicism and systemization. Thus the archaeological scholar who arranged such an exhibition would always strive to systematize a huge range of material, attempting to find a place for one icon or another in a chronological order. Since, however, the spectator was in no position to assimilate so elaborately organized a series of works, the label, the guidebook and the catalogue came to his or her aid.

Nowadays we can read the name of an icon, its date and where it was painted on a label placed either next to it or somewhere near the start of the exhibition. When such exhibitions of icons were first introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, instead of this there would be a label stuck directly onto the edge of the icon – that is, on the frame or the glass that housed it – as if it were a collection of minerals or butterflies. In the spirit of positivism such labels carrying written texts on the front of the work were part of the rationalistic commentary that was provided by a specialist for the viewer. In the 'neo-sacral' system of museum exposition they were clearly a substitute for the text of a *kontakion*, troparion or some sort of dedication that the viewer of that time was used to seeing on icons from between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. But when the label on the front had only a number, it served as an indicator sign. Its significance would be revealed in a guidebook or catalogue to the given exhibition. It was as if such a label served as a link between the material framing of an icon, its textual explication in a catalogue and a scholarly conception. Just such a label, looking like a postage stamp, still adheres to an icon of *St Paraskeva with 'Life'* (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) from the former collection of Aleksey Morozov (1857–1934, illus. 126).

The catalogue is a rationalistic 'table', whose aim is systematization. And in this sense any catalogue is subject to the rules of rhetoric in its meaning of the 'science of persuasion'. Just like an ordinary material frame, the catalogue persuades and directs the viewer's consciousness, makes classifications and clarifications, 'compelling' the work of art to be understandable and accessible. The catalogue can also be considered the 'threshold of cognition' of an artwork; it is the network of evaluative attitudes cast over our viewers' perceptions. It is no accident that it was in the second half of the nineteenth century that catalogues and guidebooks, informative notes and descriptions of museums' galleries became an independent genre of popular scholarly literature: the nineteenth century, the 'age of museums', took care to transmit this genre to modern times. In the historical-archaeological exposition the artistic value of an old icon was invariably introduced at the expense of the positivist idea of evolution. This is witnessed by the substitution of originals by copies that were then widespread in many European museums, and also



126 *St Paraskeva with 'Life'*, 15th century, with early 20th-century restorations.
Collection of Aleksey Morozov. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



in the Historical Museum in Moscow, where there were copies by Adrian Prakhov of the mosaics of St Sophia in Novgorod, a copy of the famous icon *Novgorodians at Prayer* and many others. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the situation began to change. Special galleries began to be set aside for ancient icons and in catalogues they are described in a different way from other works. The exhibition of the Christian Antiquities department of Alexander III's Russian Museum in St Petersburg had just such a character (illus. 127). A few icons were still exhibited alongside cast copper or brass crosses, wooden sculptures, icon lamps and copies of mosaics and frescoes from Mount Athos. But the greater part of them had already been set aside in a special exhibition. The written description of this was compiled by the famous Russian scholar and collector Nikolay Likhachov (1862–1935), whereas the 'objects of material culture' were described separately by Mikhail Botkin. In the introduction to their 'Survey' the authors indicated that 'the objects are ordered according to their

127 Preparations for an exhibition in the gallery of the department of Christian Antiquities of the Emperor Alexander III's Russian Museum, 1898, St Petersburg.

chronological and historical sequence', thereby taking as their foundation the principle of sequential succession of 'schools' and 'manners' of Old Russian icon painting. The theoretical basis of this method was laid down as far back as the eighteenth century by the Jesuit Luigi Lanzi, who in his *History of Italian Painting* (1789) created the system of chronological ordering of schools of painters, thus defining the principles whereby art is exhibited in all major museums up to the present day. The actual assignment of old icons to 'schools' and 'styles' was undertaken by the archaeologist Ivan Sakharov, an historian, Ivan Snegiryov (1793–1868) and Dmitriy Rovinsky, who drew their overall conclusions in this field from the fundamentally fantastical ideas of Old Ritualist 'popular' wisdom. With a few amendments, Nikolay Likhachov too adopted this classification, merely pointing out the complexity of classifying icons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> Styles of the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries are divided into a multitude of manners. While not a single competent icon painter will confuse icons of the 'Novgorod' and 'Muscovite' styles, in more modern styles everyone gets confused and people contradict each other. Such stylistic terms as 'Tikhvin', Tver', Yaroslavl', 'Vologda', 'Romanov' and many others still demand detailed verification.[92]

The hanging of icons on a wall from bottom to top for the sake of symmetry also spoke of the fact that the ancient icon was still regarded not so much from the point of view of artistic worth, as of historical significance. This was confirmed by the labels stuck on the face of the icons.

Thus the old icons long stayed silent, and their artistic form remained incomprehensible: it was on the whole of no interest to an Old Ritualist, a scholar or a collector. For interest to be kindled what was needed was, in the first place, for the original paint surface to be uncovered (and this became possible only with the application of new methods of restoration), and secondly the elucidation of this beauty of form in the context of the Romantic aesthetic and of the new directions that art scholarship was taking. However, this happened only at the beginning of the twentieth century. Positivism and the logic of linear progress, which had inspired exhibition settings of the previous century, were put in doubt by a new, irrational trend in knowledge. The 'intuition' of Schopenhauer and the neo-Kantian 'theory of empathy' as applied to art came into the foreground. Through 'intuition' there arose a type of cognition that brought art scholarship close to artistic creation, while according to the theory of 'empathy', worked out by Dilthey, Lipps and others, beauty began to be seen not as an objective quality, but as the result of feelings 'put into' the object by the perceiving subject. Lipps understood beauty as 'pleasure objectified in itself', while according to Dilthey empathy (*Einfühlung*) is the central category of a Romantic attitude to life in general.[93] The work of Wöllflin, too, in which universal categories of artistic form are foregrounded, has particular significance.[94]

In the context of these Romantic and neo-Kantian aesthetic views, the beauty of the Old Russian icon began to be seen as an 'aesthetic discovery' of the artist, analogous to that of the Italian Renaissance. In works by a newer generation of Russian scholars, including Pavel Muratov (1881–1950), Nikolay Shchekotov (1883–1945), Nikolay

Sychov (1883–1965) and Nikolay Punin (1888–1953), the Old Russian icon was interpreted in terms of a painterly art that could be understood only by a profound examination of its artistic form as a closed system. The beauty of an ancient icon had to bring aesthetic satisfaction. Furthermore, in the context of Solovyov's theurgic teachings this beauty could bring about the transformation of surrounding reality, since it acquired a metaphysical dimension by way of its 'intuitive' and mystical components. These were just the tasks that began to be served by issues of the special scholarly collection *Russian Icon* (1914), as well as the new, religious-aesthetic exhibitions of ancient Russian icons that were organized at the Tretyakov Gallery (1904), the museum house of Ilya Ostroukhov on Trubnikov Lane in Moscow (*c*. 1912) and finally at Emperor Alexander III's Russian Museum in St Petersburg (1914). Since modern scholarship, and also the aesthetics of *stil' modern,* was primarily concerned with the problem of *artistic expression*, the aim of the collection was stated as being 'the living study of icon painting', and the penetration of one's 'mind and heart into the sacred realm of ancient icon painting'.[95] Articles published in the collection were devoted to the stylistic peculiarities of the icon, including its composition, contours and the interrelationship of areas of colour. Responses of artists to the discovery of the ancient icon were also published. In the first issue Nikolay Rerikh defined this discovery as a 'striving towards iconic beauty', while this beauty was itself seen as 'the bold art of the ancient painters', the result of 'authentic creativity' and even of 'ecstasy', in which the culture of *stil' modern* inevitably observed a breakthrough that took it beyond the limit of observable reality.[96]

In this same context another important detail with a bearing on the meaning of the new exhibitions is apparent. In the circumstances of the theurgic aesthetic, the original layer of paint of the Old Russian icon could change its form. This took place in the process of restoration of practically all icons from the collections of Ostroukhov, Ryabushinsky, Morozov, Pavel Kharitonenko and others.[97] Some parts of the icon could receive additional paint, others could have it removed; outlines were freely changed, colours were made brighter and faces were given more emotion. By such means a 'masterpiece' of ancient icon painting might be created, aimed at a particular response from the viewer. The expression of artistic form was called upon to remove consciousness into a zone of emotional excitement and aesthetic pleasure, which was in fact the aim less of medieval than of illusionistic art.

Thus in 1911, under instructions from the artist and collector Ostroukhov, and no doubt following his specifications, the restorer and icon painter I. A. Baranov changed the face on a sixteenth-century icon of *St George Slaying the Dragon* (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) from Ostroukhov's collection (illus. 128), removed the gold on the background, replaced the actual stylized hillocks with a flat background, and added a painted shield and a red cloak blowing in the wind.[98] As a result the icon was changed almost beyond recognition. Within its space the ontology of a medieval depiction and metaphysical beauty met with the romantic beauty of aesthetic religion. Ostroukhov, with the help of an icon painting restorer, created an 'absolute masterpiece' of Old Russian art, which was a 'displaced likeness', a kind of 'theurgical object' let loose upon the world so as to lead to the



128 *St George Slaying the Dragon*, 16th century (with restorations 1911).
Collection of Ilya Ostroukhov. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

reconfiguration of life according to the rules of a lost, and then rediscovered, beauty. The location of such icons in a religious-aesthetic exhibition, and also their wide distribution as illustrative prints in an age of mechanical reproduction, was a response to this task. If previously the Old Ritualist would strive only to follow medieval models and rules, which established definite bounds for him, and changing the ancient image's forms was imagined as a sacred process of discovery of transcendental beauty, now this altered form appeared as beauty discovered by way of experiment, attained in the process of the creative act. This beauty was an embodied artistic idea, located in the consciousness of the artist and the imitator.

Moreover, inspired by 'intuition' and the 'theory of empathy', scholarly interpretation of this idea made it even more active in its effect on the perceiving consciousness. By this stage the text, close as it was to a creative work, shifted the 'frame of reality' further away, laying bare the expression of a new 'art object' and 'forcing' its form as it were to go beyond its limits in having an active effect on the world. Here, for example, is how Nikolay Shchekotov describes the Ostroukhov icon:

> Splendid, too, is the silhouette of *St George Slaying the Dragon* in the collection of I. S. Ostroukhov. Certain of the features of a multi-figured iconic composition that we have already established are interestingly applied in it. Here the main action has no need for support from surroundings. It is forceful enough in itself – fiery enough, I should indeed like to say, as I recollect the billowing red cloak of St George. Despite its impetuousness, movement in this composition is derived from two factors: from the initial impulse of the steed away from the viewer to the right, as if beyond the edge of the icon, and the unexpectedly bold twist of the holy warrior and his steed in the other direction. The line of the lance, thrust into the maw of the dragon, merely strengthens the latter movement within the limits of the icon, according to the principle of the internal closure of the iconic world. St George's elegant twisted posture can be explained by the desire to place the head of the saint in a nimbus in the centre of the icon-board, as the main prayerful theme of the icon. From another point of view, this twist gives a special lightness, a feeling of his having been singled out, to the deed of the holy warrior, who leans his angelic face on his own shoulder as if in sorrow.

This description, by no means free from a touch of romantic mystification, was supplemented by a scholarly Romantic hypothesis about the creativity of the Old Russian artist: as Shchekotov said in the same article, 'Following how the artist "arranged" various parts of the depiction so as the better to express his artistic intentions, we see, as if waking up to it, the activity of his creative powers, under whose influence the icon was crystallized.'[99] Employing the same intermediary of the aesthetic act as had also been used for the perception of the beauty of the ancient icon, the emotions and views of the scholar himself were projected upon it. 'Empathy' towards the artistic form conditioned the power and depth of aesthetic pleasure. For that reason the altered forms of the Ostroukhov icon were not so much a 'falsification' in the modern sense of the term, but rather an insertion of the 'feelings of the perceiving subject' into it, and





129–130 Ilya Ostroukhov's museum of icons and various paintings, *c.* 1912–20.

hence a rhetorical 'summons' of the perceiving consciousness to a dialogue whose aim was the discovery of the romantic beauty of the Old Russian image.[100]

It was precisely this romantic understanding of the beauty of the Old Russian icon that demanded a corresponding manner of framing it in museums. The ancient icon was cleaned and partly given additional paintwork with the aim of putting it in a theurgic exhibition reminiscent of an Old Russian iconostasis, a prayer house or an 'icon hall'. In other words, the icon of *St George Slaying the Dragon* was thought of as part of an integrated ensemble, which had to produce an impression of the overwhelming beauty of Old Russian painting, to evoke by the 'expressionism' of its contours and its areas of colour the 'ecstasy' of feelings and experiences so beloved of the art of *stil' modern* (illus. 129, 130). In the creation of such an exhibition the artist, Ilya Ostroukhov, played no less a role than the scholar, since the exhibition itself was planned as a work of art, embodying the idea of absolute beauty and destined to carry out the 'theurgic work' in the space between the image and the perceiving consciousness. Essentially, 'theurgic' exhibitions set themselves the same tasks as did the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church. They presupposed the possibility of transforming the world through the power of art itself. It is hardly accidental that the exhibition of Old Russian icons in the Tretyakov Gallery in 1904 was planned following a design by Vasnetsov, who took as his starting point the iconostasis of the Abramtsevo church (illus. 75, 131). Indeed, the display cabinets were prepared in the same Abramtsevo carpenters' shop. The stylized form of the Old Russian iconostasis at once gave one's perception of museum icons the aura of religion. So it made one feel as if the museum were the distant semblance of a church.

A similar feeling was aroused in Ostroukhov's museum of paintings and icons. While rendering the aesthetic of *stil' modern* its due, around 1912 this collector set up an icon exhibition in a suite of rooms in his house, which in Pavel Muratov's



131 Exhibition of Old Russian icons in the Tretyakov Gallery, 1904, designed by Viktor Vasnetsov.

words 'replicated the ancient model of a Moscow boyar's seventeenth century museum chapel'.[101] Pride of place in the exhibition went to some large-format icons made by the school of Novgorod in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[102] In nineteenth-century domestic Old Ritualist prayer rooms, small, 'measured' images for personal devotion predominated. Particularly valued were Stroganov school icons of the early seventeenth century, noted for their exciting miniature technique and for 'bringing the mind to astonishment', to quote Paul of Aleppo.[103] Meanwhile, the opening up of Old Ritualist sanctuaries in 1905, and the official permission granted to Old Ritualists to build their own churches, led to the revelation of a wave of large-format icons, which were brought down from the north to be placed in multi-tiered iconostases in the newly built Old Ritualist churches. Some of the major architects of the period of Russian *stil' modern* – Shchusev, Bondarenko, Krichinsky and others – worked on their design. Certain of these churches, too, were built by the Old Ritualist and banker Stepan Ryabushinsky, who first devised the idea of opening up this native seam of the Old Russian icon.[104] Freeing large icons from subsequent layers of paint in the first place spared Ryabushinsky the trouble of ordering new ones, and secondly was dictated by his interests as a collector. It is incidentally important to note that his icons underwent a type of restoration analogous to those of Ostroukhov: the first layer of paintwork, revealed by cleaning, was partially repainted and then the tonal juxtapositions and the expressiveness of the contours could be changed. It is usual to regard this kind of restoration as 'antiquarian', but it would be more precise to term it 'theurgic', that is to say aimed at a special, religio-aesthetic perception of the beauty of the Old Russian icon.[105] In this, incidentally, resides the unique quality of such works, their particular significance not only for the history of Old Russian icon painting, but also for Russian culture of the so-called Silver Age.

The powerful emotional effect of Ostroukhov's collection evidently came from his innovation of displaying authentic and large-format 'masterpieces' of Old Russian painting not in a church, but in the special 'frame' of an exhibition, allowing their beauty to be appreciated within the aura of the national religion. If the metaphysical properties of this beauty were revealed in an Old Ritualist church in the context of the liturgy, then in Ostroukhov's museum house the beauty of the ancient icon came to the fore as the power of art itself. The religious dimension of the exhibition was deeply hidden and was ranked below aesthetic pleasure. The icons were put in special showcases and were set along the walls: the lower rank was occupied primarily by icons of saints' lives and the Orthodox feasts, while the upper row held the apostles and prophets. Putting 'royal doors' in the middle of the wall of icons turned it into the likeness of a two-tier iconostasis. The icons were also hung in the corners of the rooms, recalling the 'fine corner' of the traditional Russian living chamber. Elements of Old Russian architecture and pieces of old furniture enhanced the atmosphere of the 'museum chapel'. Judging by contemporary reactions, Ostroukhov's collection produced an unusually powerful impact. Muratov, for example, wrote of Ostroukhov's collection that:

> In Ilya Sergeyevich's activity as a collector, in the first place one must say that the purely artistic

> point of view has taken precedence over any other. The concepts of 'age' and 'rarity' have finally given way to artistry. Only now has it [i.e. the Russian icon] been awarded its place in the hierarchy of eternal and worldwide artistic treasures.[106]

Nikolay Shchekotov discussed the fact that only an artist could make such a collection:

> Ilya Ostroukhov was the first to go along the road of collecting works of ancient art, guided primarily by his artistic taste; such an attitude to the monuments of antiquity was to some extent natural for him: being himself a talented artist, he could not of course understand any kind of works of art in any other way.[107]

The avant-garde artist Aleksey Grishchenko (1883–1977) noted that:

> Ostroukhov, beginning his collection in 1909, was one of the first to draw attention to the artistic side of the Old Russian icon. He boldly undertook the task of cleaning off the darkened varnish and overpainting, and exposed the authentic work of our ancient masters.[108]

Prince Sergey Shcherbatov (1875–1962), who agreed with Ostroukhov's views on studying and collecting icons, recalled the aesthetic impact of icon painting:

> Something so great, so undervalued, till then so unexpected in Russian art, that it eclipsed all its erstwhile achievements in painting, that now seem pathetic and insignificant. It is as if a sort of veil has fallen from before our eyes, able at last to see clearly and with astonishment our own Russian iconic art, now standing side by side with the highest works of world renown in Ravenna, with the best frescoes of the Italian cathedrals, the best primitives – meanwhile differentiated from all we know in the field of religious art by a special Russian affective quality, together with seriousness and a festive joy in colour.[109]

Shcherbatov's comparison of the Ostroukhov icons with 'the best primitives' was no accident. The large-format Novgorod icons produced between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries clearly reminded his contemporaries of the products of the Italian proto-Renaissance: the altar images of Cimabue and Duccio. In the age of *stil' modern* the whole of European painting before the High Renaissance was assigned to the category of 'primitives'. In Western Europe a real discovery in this context was the exhibition of 'Flemish Primitives and Early Art', held in Bruges in 1902, where the painting of Flemish fifteenth-century masters was shown to the astonishment of scholars, critics and artists.[110] In Russia the 'Exhibition of Old Russian Art' held in Moscow in 1913, organized by Ryabushinsky and dedicated to the three-hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, had a similar significance.[111] A considerable number of visitors were shown large-format icons from the Ryabushinsky and Ostroukhov collections for the first time at this exhibition. Muratov, Shchekotorov, Punin, Benois and many other scholars, artists, writers and critics wrote excited reviews. Representatives of the new school of art historians underlined 'the discovery of a whole new art',

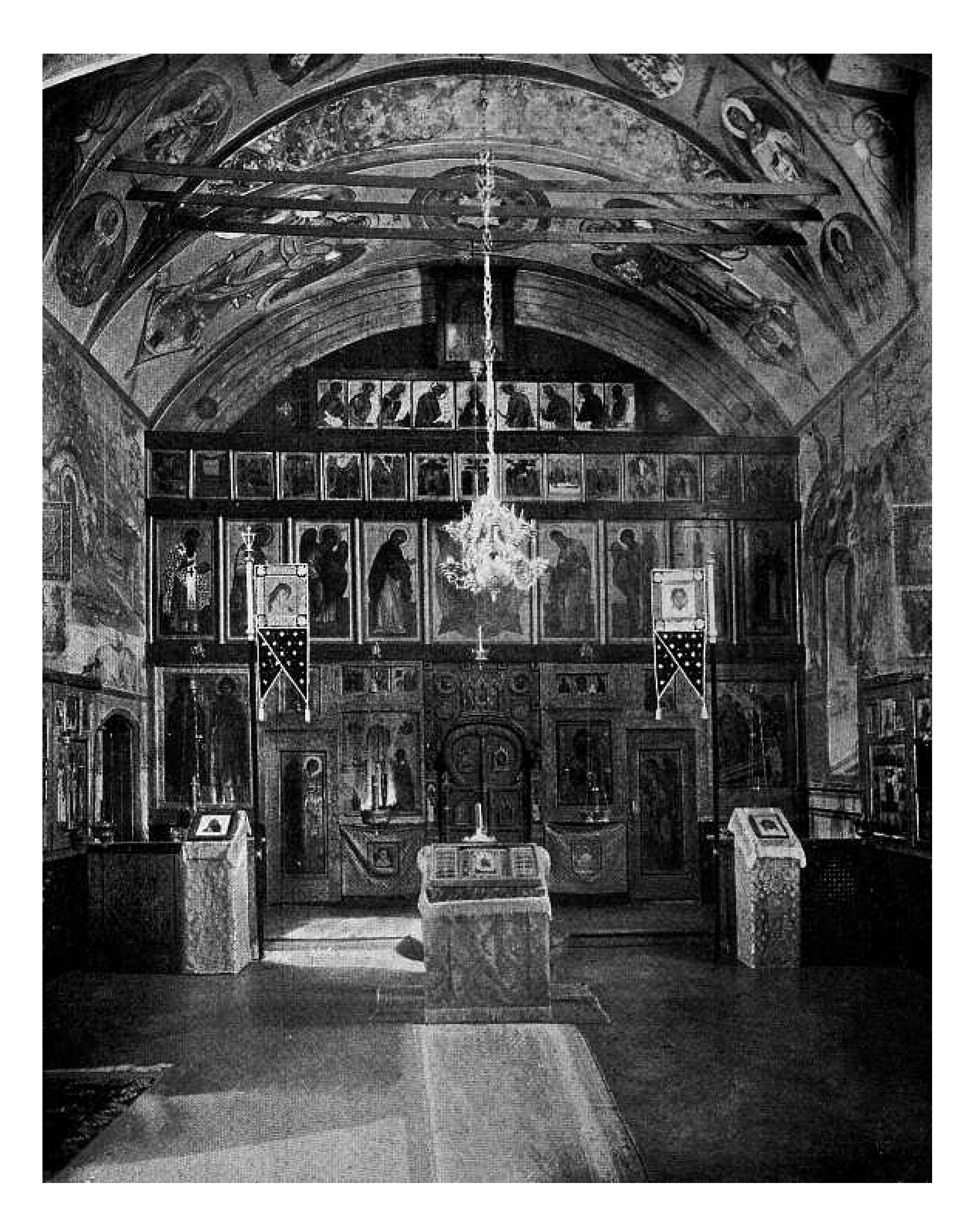
whose anonymity was 'mere chance'. Russian icon painters, they reckoned, possessed 'artistic capabilities'. Moreover, the forms of the ancient icons also answered to the particular 'artistic taste' of those who prayed before them, as Muratov surmised:

> Novgorod icons without doubt answered to some sort of exclusive and aristocratic demands of feelings and imagination. Their anonymity is just pure chance. Individual masters were able with exceptional delicacy and subtlety to express their individuality in their comprehension of form and in their use of colour.[112]

Stylistic analysis of Novgorod icons permitted scholars also to detect a link between fifteenth-century Russian art and Byzantine painting of the Palaeologan period, and hence to draw the conclusion that Russian history possessed its own proto-Renaissance age. The Old Russian icon turned out to be an inheritor of the beauty of antiquity: 'Russian icon painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, emerging from Byzantine art of the fourteenth century, upheld much of its Hellenistic tradition.'[113] So it was that for the first time the methods of neo-Kantian art scholarship in the spirit of Wölfflin were applied to the analysis of the Old Russian icon. In the framework of the Romantic perception of the world these led to the emancipation of the idea of beauty, which was mistakenly transferred from the realm of the individual intention and emotional experience of the artistic creator to the field of medieval applied aesthetics. The rhetorical basis of medieval culture, with its fusion of the aesthetic with the theological, naturally enough excluded the development of the 'free' art of painting within the framework of a corresponding system of concepts. It is no accident that Pavel Florensky criticized the icon museum in the context of his philosophy of religion, putting forward the proposition that 'in a church we stand face to face with a Platonic world of ideas, whereas in a museum we see no icons, only caricatures of them'. Since for Florensky the icon was indissolubly bound up with 'liturgical action as synthesis of the arts', its place was exclusively within the sacred space of a church, where it 'has its genuine artistic meaning and can be contemplated in all its authentic artistry'.[114]

Meanwhile, it was on this level that the organizers of the Novgorod Icon Hall in the Russian Museum, St Petersburg, clearly attempted to find ways of approaching a museum exhibition. By comparison with Vasnetsov's and Ostroukhov's exhibitions, the Novgorod Icon Hall was the most precise, and from the artistic point of view also the more interesting, way in which a museum and religious building could be approximated. According to the second issue of *Russian Icon*, the opening and dedication of the Department of Old Russian Art – known in full as the Archive of Monuments of Russian Icon Painting and Church Antiquities, Dedicated to the Emperor Nicholas II – took place on 18 March 1914.[115] The Novgorod Icon Hall was a part of this 'archive' (illus. 121). It was created at the expense of the Moscow collector Pavel Kharitonenko, who commissioned the architect Aleksey Shchusev to design a church of the Transfiguration of Christ (1908–12) at his country estate of Natal'yevka in the Kharkov province, where he also deposited his collection of Old Russian icons (illus. 132).

Thus an 'icon hall' was envisaged as a 'museum analogue' to a church. One of the walls of the



132 Church of the Transfiguration of Christ at Natal'yevka, 1908–12, architect Aleksey Shchusev.

museum hall was occupied by the stylized construction of a three-tier iconostasis, adorned with silver *basma* (metal plating) and built in the workshop of the Mishukov brothers 'according to ancient Novgorod models'. A great round *khoros* (candelabrum) took the place of a chandelier up above, while in front of the 'royal doors' there were free-standing candle holders, and lecterns displaying examples of Old Russian textiles, upholstered with luxurious material. Brocade, made in Rome following ancient patterns, covered the floor of the showcases. We are told that 'to display the icons the art historical process, rather than an archaeological arrangement of the material, has fundamentally been followed', also taking into account the 'colour relations' of the objects on show.[116] As a result, a genuine *chef-d'oeuvre* of theurgic art of the modernist age was set before the viewer; according to contemporary reviews, it was perceived as no less than a 'temple of new artistic discoveries' and as a 'museum-temple, just as the early Russian churches were'.[117] But the same could have been said about the church in Natal'yevka, which according to the recollections of Prince Sergey Shcherbatov was envisaged as 'the sacred archive of a whole museum of splendid icons in an ancient style of the best period'.[118] Its iconostasis and wall-mounted cases contained genuine icons of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many of which had been displayed at the 1913 'Exhibition of Old Russian Art' in Moscow.[119] For that reason there is every reason to believe that the architectural forms of the church of the Transfiguration of Christ, its white limestone carvings by Alexander Matveyev and the wall paintings by A. Savinov were inspired by the theurgic concept of the beauty of the Old Russian icon – more precisely, they served as its curious romantic *framing*. And if in Natal'yevka the beauty of an icon was interpreted through the liturgy and the whole ecclesiastical cosmos, then in the Russian Museum it was a part of scholarly and artistic interpretation and of the Orthodox world view simultaneously.

The work of art as objective reality (Schelling), art as a higher form of cognition (Schopenhauer), the theory of 'empathy' in artistic form (Dilthey and Lipps), art setting itself theurgic tasks (Solov'yov) – all these ideas, caught up with scholarship, literature and painting, were part of the intellectual baggage of the 'Silver Age'. Indeed, the exhibitions of Old Russian art examined above nourished themselves on them too. Meanwhile, these exhibitions brought in their wake not only new scholarly interpretations of the works themselves, but also exercised an influence on Russian religious-philosophical thought between 1910 and 1920. Under the direct influence of Ostroukhov's collection and of Shchusev's Novgorod Icon Hall, for example, Yevgeniy Trubetskoy (1863–1920) wrote his notable essays 'Philosophy through Paint' (1916) and 'The Two Worlds of Russian Icon Painting' (1916), which both relate to the religious and aesthetic experiences of encountering the beauty of the early icon, and the impact of the theurgical exhibition on a creative and aesthetically sensitive perception. These essays could also be understood as philosophical fantasies in the style of late Schelling and Vladimir Solovyov. The icon attracted Trubetskoy by its 'national countenance' and 'conciliar impulse' on the path to the formation of independent Russian thought. The philosopher saw in them theurgic art – a bridge to a renewed and transfigured life, 'a depiction of the coming ecclesiastical and conciliar humanity'.[120] One could cautiously suppose that it was under

the influence of such exhibitions that Sergey Bulgakov too developed his original teachings. Within the framework of his 'Sophiology' he could regard icon painting as a 'theurgic act, in which the revelation of the supermundane is witnessed in the images of this earth', where 'God reveals himself in human creation'.[121]

Meanwhile, in 1917 the theurgic exhibitions of icons, which gave art an obviously exaggerated significance and role, were superseded in the course of a revolutionary and far from religious-aesthetic transformation of Russian history. Of course, in ages of revolution art not only undergoes reinterpretation – it is summoned to the task of instilling a fundamentally new, revolutionary ideology into the mass consciousness. Museum exhibitions are by no means backward in this respect, as is demonstrated both by the Louvre in Napoleon's time and by the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow between 1928 and 1932 at the time of the 'cultural revolution'. In 1929 art historian Aleksey Fyodorov-Davydov drew up a famous plan for the Soviet museum, the 'sociological exposition' of which proposed that works of art should be appreciated solely as 'documents of their age', having 'socio-material and ideological significance'.[122] For that reason the 'Marxist Overview Exhibition' of 1931–2 displayed Old Russian icons in the 'framing' of



133 Exhibition of icons by Andrey Rublyov in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1931–2.



quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, which deflected consciousness from the aesthetic perception of the works towards their understanding as 'documents', reflecting the class struggle of their times. 'Juxtapositions of class styles', wrote Fyodorov-Davydov about this exhibition,

> are presented without a large amount of material in one and the same gallery, as for example when the progressive ideology of the trading landowners of the second half of the sixteenth century, who showed solidarity with the merchants and put forward a new set of themes for the image in icon painting, is juxtaposed with the conservative art of the boyar elite, continuing the fossilized tradition of the stylized and ceremonial art of Rublyov and Dionisy.[123]

Archival photographs show us that icons as significant for the history of Old Russian culture as the *Vladimir Mother of God* (first quarter of the twelfth century; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) and the *Trinity* by Andrey Rublyov (*c.* 1400; Tretyakov Gallery) have been given additional framing (illus. 134, 134). We have previously discussed the sacred meaning of the ark of the Vladimir *Mother of God*

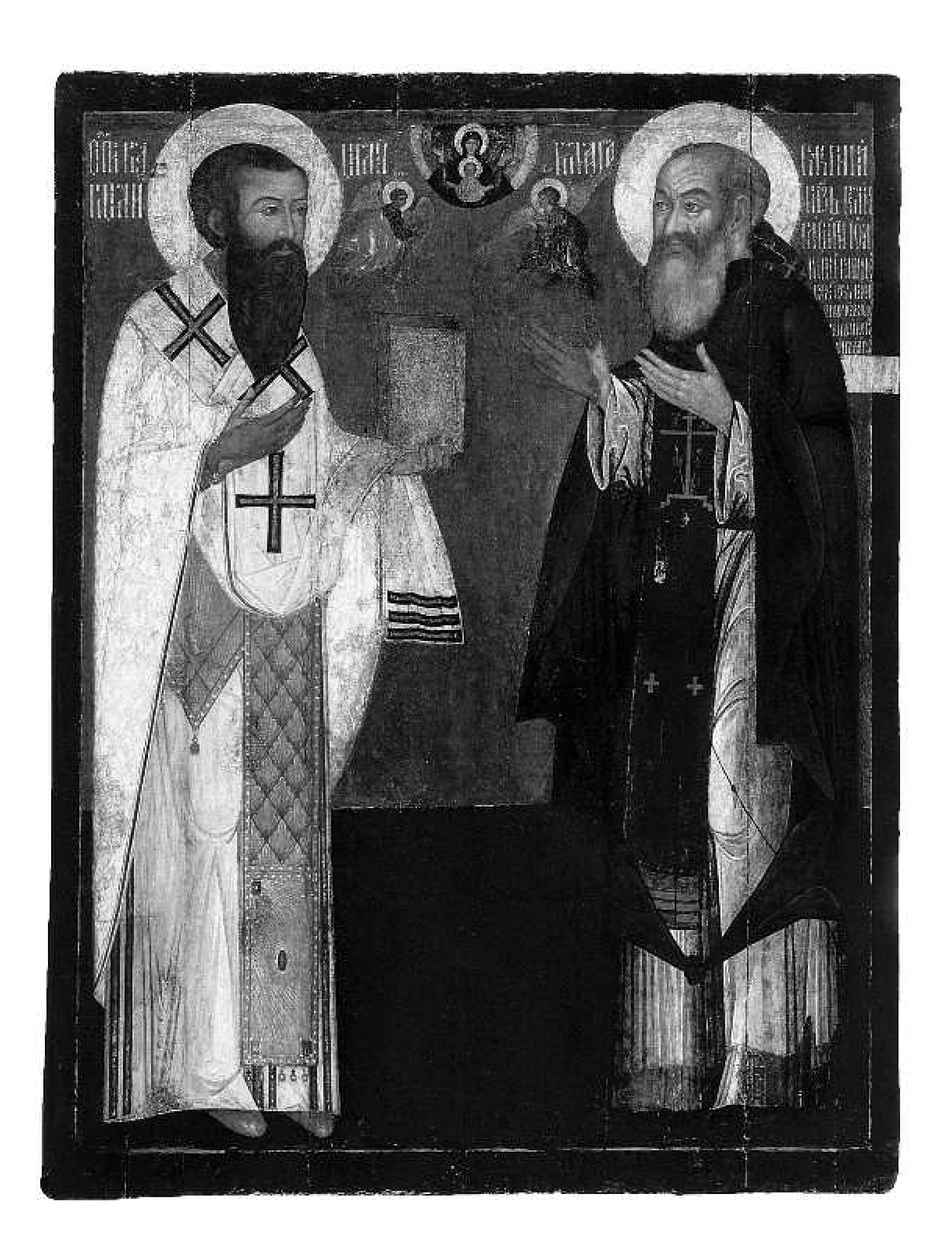
134 Exhibition of Old Russian icons at the Tretyakov Gallery, 1936.

as dictated by the medieval aesthetic of the cult image (see chapter One). Framing of the *stil' modern* period could cause us to perceive the ancient icon as a work of theurgic art. The 'showcase' frame of the Marxist exhibition then 'thrusts' upon us its role as a 'document of its age'. The museum frame thus inexorably 'makes' us perceive the work in a way that depends on a given value system. Once the 'cultural revolution' in the Tretyakov Gallery had ended, people once again remembered the artistic form of Old Russian icons. The choice of works was governed from the standpoint of artistic styles, while the museum display was conceived of as both a scholarly and a touristic guide to the periods and 'schools' of Old Russian painting. The museum exhibition was once again orientated towards the display of the icon as 'masterpiece'. In framing the icon, the contemporary museum showcase designedly 'tears it out' of its historical framing structures (casings or iconostases) and treats it as an object intended for aesthetic enjoyment. Hence a single icon can be placed in a separate showcase with a coloured background and a spotlight upon it. The particular organization of the wall surfaces, holding as they do the least possible number of exhibits, is also linked with this purpose. Incidentally, in Western European museums such exhibitions came into being from the 1930s onwards, when the Louvre began to reject the hanging of pictures like 'wallpaper'.[124]

In other words the contemporary icon exhibition is an elegant and rigorous system whereby the viewer engages with the work of art. But it is interesting to observe that bringing art close to politics mythologizes history as scholarship, whereas putting an exclusively aesthetic appreciation of the icon in the foreground leads to an understanding of its form in the context of the scholarly stereotypes that have been formed. In comparison with this system the contemporary exhibition of a private collection seems closer to improvisation. It cannot be separated from the interior space of a house, and attempts to reflect the personal enthusiasms of the collector, his or her taste, self-imposed tasks, interests and social position. Hence in framing an ancient icon the modern collector displays a personal attitude towards it, provoking the viewer to dialogue and reflection. The 'active' role of such a frame also nowadays evokes the heightened interest of theoreticians of culture. After all, the frame is always a threshold for the perception of what is within and what is outside it: it is the historical stereotype of our consciousness. Such, evidently, is the essence of any frame, including too that of a modern frame for an ancient icon.

PART TWO

PLAYING WITH SPACE



CHAPTER 3

The Lustre of Power

His Majesty was at home in his workshop,
turning a frame for his portrait . . .
Documents from the court of Peter the Great[1]

The Palace: Frame, Picture and History

In the seventeenth, eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries the Russian autocrat's palace was the heart of the realm, in which beat all that was most astonishing and precious in the arts. From the very beginnings of Russian absolutism the monarch's palace was always seen as 'the shrine of power', and everything in it that surrounded the person of the all-powerful monarch was part of a carefully thought-out system of levels of meaning, in which the great sovereign was God's deputy on earth. A persuasive role in it was played by the framing, in the widest sense of the term, that the palace provided: the frames of paintings and graphic work, and frames formed by entrance gates, doors and balustrades, walls and windows, floors and ceilings. Exquisite and sumptuous decoration, unbelievably complex spatial articulation – it all went into the functions of framing. Infinite invention and ingenuity, and of course lavish expenditure, created an overpowering aesthetic space that obliged anyone who entered it to have one and the same thought in his head: the monarch was the centre of all things on earth.

Such was the nature of the huge variety of framing effects in the Great Kremlin Palace, rebuilt between 1839 and 1848 under the direction of Konstantin Ton (1794–1881), which was designed for the ceremonial of coronations. This palace had a number of singularities that were dictated by the aesthetics of Russian Romanticism. At the behest of Nicholas I it included within its precincts buildings of the Old Russian period, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries: the Iranovitaya Palata (Hall of Facets) and Terem Palace, the Golden Chamber of the Tsaritsa and private churches. Thus the Great Kremlin Palace became a setting – a frame – for Old Russian monuments and sacred objects, paying tribute to its own century, the 'century of museums', with its prodigious appetite for collecting national antiquities and historical symbols of national power. It was not by chance that the rebuilt Armoury Palace stood next to the Great Kremlin Palace as its own museum. The conception of a 'frame', in the form of a new palace, for an ancient national sacred place and the glorious history of the Russian Empire determined not only the main characteristics of its facade, on which the forms of window embrasures repeated the carved *nalichniki* (ornamental surrounds) of the Terem Palace, but also the chief distinction of the Great Kremlin Palace – the architectural ornamentation and decoration of the ceremonial rooms, which

135 *St Basil the Great and the Grand Prince Vasiliy III, named 'Varlaam' when a Monk*, 1530s–40s, tomb icon. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

were unique for its time, and are regarded as the last attempt at palatial programming on such a scale in European architecture.

The monarch and the state were one and the same. This was the principal meaning of the rhetoric of the palatial picture frame, inseparable in Russia throughout its history from portraits of the tsar. On Russian icons through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, depictions of the Russian tsars invariably obeyed the norms of icon painting: the tsar was included in the divine order alongside the saints (illus. 135). The icon frame undoubtedly sacralized the subject portrayed, inasmuch as it served as a sign that the representation was to be received within the genre of icon painting. Only a very little later, however, portrayals of Russian autocrats appeared with a separate frame bearing depictions of trophies and heraldic patterns, unequivocally expressing an enhanced idea of the State. This development began to take place at the dawn of Russian absolutism in the reign of Aleksey Mikhaylovich (*reg* 1645–76), and by the time of Peter the Great (*reg* 1682–1725) such portraits were widespread and had achieved their final form.

The fact that Peter the Great was 'turning', on a special machine, a frame for his portrait ('a carpenter on the throne', as Pushkin has it) in 1715 is a clear sign of the times, although the claim can be taken metaphorically. This was the period, the Baroque, when the genre of the ceremonial portrait was established in Russia, when patronage of the arts passed decisively from the Church to the monarch and the upper aristocracy. Peter imitated Western European architectural style and court etiquette in his palaces. And one way and another he took up the idea of extolling the absolute monarch. The Russian tsar set out to do everything himself, keeping an eye on everything and setting his hand to everything, not only shipbuilding and making frames for palace pictures, but even painting palace portraits: on 25 January 1715 'His Majesty painted a portrait of the Tsaritsa Paraskov'ya Feodorovna.'[2]

In the Baroque period a court ritual was established in Russia that became fixed in many different visual forms. The chief of these was the ceremonial portrait. This was a privilege of the aristocracy, an inseparable part of court and estate life. In all its artistic characteristics – idealization of the subject, setting, landscape, palette – it always served the purpose of glorification of the person depicted. And the same purpose was served by the picture frame. From the moment when Russian art bent to the task of demonstrating imperial power, the frame of a portrait of an important person actively helped the viewer to appreciate his or her greatness. The main themes here were the triumph and apotheosis of the autocratic ruler, his or her sacralization, and his or her connections with the most important figures in the world. In other words, if ceremonial portraits served the function of glorification and demonstration of prestige, then so did their frames.

The Petrine reforms brought the problem of European cultural invasion, which changed not only the way of life but also the way of thinking of the Russian aristocracy. Western culture, as we have seen, was already making its mark in the second half of the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth Russia was deeply permeated with the brilliant culture of Italy and France, with its high valuation of thought, fashion and the arts. Famous Western architects, painters and sculptors therefore worked in Russia, together with Russian masters, to create the kind of

'framing' that would be worthy of the ruler of a great empire. Drawing on all the power of symbol and metaphor, the frame of a depiction of a Russian monarch was intended to elevate his portrait against the background of other portraits, to single it out and give it concrete expression, to make the imperial personality familiar and irresistible in its power and renown; to convey that in a leading empire such as Russia, the state embodied in the crowned sovereign was always and everywhere the principal player. The symbolically fused construction of the palace portrait and its frame was, in short, a proclamation of the well-known absolutist formula *l'état, c'est moi*.

The idea of the divinely protected ruler reached Russia from distant sources. It was familiar in Egypt, the Byzantine Empire and the West. The nineteenth century brought a distinctively Russian flavour to the idea: sacralization of the Russian autocrat proceeded in the context of Nicolas I's proclaimed system of 'orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality', which became, in essence, the official programme for the construction of the state under Alexander II (*reg* 1855–81), Alexander III (*reg* 1883–94) and Nicholas II (*reg* 1894–1917). The ideological and philosophical premises of this programme were in tune with the new understanding of national history stirring in Europe at the time. The turning to the past of the Russian state took the form of development of the idea of Holy Rus' or Moscow as the Third Rome, which was turned into the ideological state programme in domestic and foreign policy. This theme runs through Russian literature, theatre, music, painting and architecture of the second half of the nineteenth century. The doctrine of 'official nationality' is reflected most clearly in Russian Romantic art and in Alexander III's general policy. A graphic example in art is Ilya Repin's painting *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts in the Courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace, Moscow* (1886; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow), commissioned on the new tsar's accession to the throne (illus. 136). (A *volost* was the smallest rural administrative area in imperial Russia.) The painting depicts his speech at a feast held in the courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace on 21 May 1883, which was part of the coronation celebrations.[3] The painting originally had an elaborate gilded frame adorned with motifs symbolic of the state, and before the October Revolution it hung in the Antechamber of the Great Kremlin Palace. Through its frame the picture partook of a special symbolism of time and place,[4] and was inseparable from court ritual and coronation ceremonies calculated to reflect the brilliance, power and infallibility of the central figures (illus. 137, 138). After the Revolution, however, the picture, with its portrait of Emperor Alexander III, was removed from its place in the Antechamber, and from 1950 to 1991 its place was taken by the painting *Vladimir Lenin Speaking at the Third Komsomol Congress* (1950; Historical Museum, Moscow), from the studio of the Soviet artist Boris Ioganson (illus. 145). Repin's painting displays the special significance of its location in the Antechamber of the Great Kremlin Palace, and it is inseparably linked with the rebuilding of the palace in the 1930s and the cultural-historical realia of the Soviet period.

Repin's painting depicts the emperor speaking, surrounded by his people, represented by the heads of the volosts, who have travelled from all over Russia to this spot. His words are displayed on the picture frame, which is an element in the whole composition and covered with ornamental images



of fantastic beasts and various emblems and symbols associated with the state. This ornament links the frame not only with the picture, as do the emperor's words, but also with the palace wall that surrounds the painting with architectural space and the mythology of Holy Rus'. The emperor is placed at the central point of the whole composition, his rising figure seeming to stand on a pediment, represented by his shadow. He is represented full-length; his dark, massive figure in full-dress uniform and his lucid, serene face mediate between the visible and the invisible; he seems to possess power not given by this world. His head slightly turned, he looks into the distance, above the heads of his people. His gaze is fixed on some point that the viewer cannot locate within the painting; it is evidently outside the frame. It is as if the emperor is viewing the heavens, which will confer on him the wisdom needed to rule, confound his enemies and judge his subjects according to the justice of the law; as if he is contemplating the heavenly equivalent of the harmony that man seeks to realize on earth. This is why there is a strongly drawn line from the emperor's eyes to the object of his attention, of which no one looking at the painting can fail to be aware; it cuts across the picture frame and makes the area it delimits seem to move and become displaced, so that the whole composition,

136 Ilya Repin, *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts in the Courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace, Moscow*, 1886. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

which at first sight looks so stable, becomes airy, almost weightless. This otherworldliness of the scene is also brought out by the emperor's pose. He stands on his own shadow, as if on a cloud, and consequently the light source (the sunlight) is localized almost exactly above his head. Sunlight floods both foreground and background, and the viewer again feels the heavens' reflection on earth, the closeness of the light yellowish colour of the ground to that of the gilt surround, reminiscent of the background of an icon. We seem to have before us a scene of complete and harmonious mutual understanding: the emperor listens to God and speaks to his people; and the people listening to him hear the words of the Heavenly Father.

How are the people depicted? They surround their sovereign. The figures in the foreground are not so tall as the emperor: the artist employs the device of reverse perspective, highlighting the proportions of the most important figure placed at the centre. Thus, as in an icon painting, the figures in the foreground form the true frame for the emperor's portrait. Furthermore, they are shown in back view; it was important to the artist to bring out their respect and attentiveness to the emperor. In the background the emperor's family are depicted, standing in front of courtiers, Cossacks and the opened gates with a view through to the packed Khodynka Field, where traditionally the people held celebrations in honour of a coronation. The volost leaders depicted in the foreground are clearly to be taken as representatives of the people who are seen in the distance, beyond the precincts of the palace and the main action of the painting. It is significant, however, that the palace gates are open; on the vertical axis of the picture this symbolizes the link between the people and its representatives and the figure of the emperor. And on this vertical axis the emperor is again at the fixed centre of the composition – as he is from all viewpoints, both those of all the people in the painting and ours, the viewers'. This exact coincidence of viewpoints yet further enhances the emperor's glorification. Another contribution to the effect of stability is made by the walls of the Petrovsky Palace, which neither limit nor enclose the space; on the contrary, they bring out its openness and perform the compositional function of columns, traditionally taken as symbolic of power and stability.

The emperor's gesture with his right hand emphasizes the gravity of every word he speaks. This gesture, like the emperor's whole figure, is a confirmation of truth and justice. It is also an indicator that the action is taking place exclusively at the centre of the scene; the emperor speaks, but the people surrounding him are completely still. The two extreme figures on either side in the foreground gently set the tone of the whole composition: the listener at the left-hand edge of the picture raises his hands to his eyes either in protection against the sunlight or in reaction to the grandeur of the emperor's person, while the right-hand figure is depicted in astonishment at some revelation in the emperor's words. The rest of the people are filled with concentrated attentiveness, and their bodily attitudes and facial expressions register profound respect for the emperor. Someone else inclines his head as if before a living icon. In other words, in all the crowd framing the emperor there is no action, or almost none. And it might seem as if the viewer is excluded from the whole situation. However, this is not so. Between the eye of the viewer and the event taking place on the canvas the frame intervenes. The images on it make one

wonder to what extent they transform the composition into a complex metaphor. Read as an addition to the picture, the frame convinces the viewer that the state system of Alexander III is built on the ideal of an orthodox monarchy and popular belief in the reality of some imaginary realm.

On first looking at the painting the viewer's attention is immediately caught by the large panel on the bottom of the frame. In the middle of the panel, directly in front of the eyes of the viewer – that is, straight in front of *us* – is a rectangular inner frame, reminiscent of icon frames of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. These usually bore the words of prayers or psalms addressed by mortal man to Christ, the Mother of God or a saint. In this case the inner frame contains the words of the emperor addressed to the people depicted in the painting:

> I am very glad to see you again; I heartily thank you for your participation in our celebrations, to which the whole of Russia has responded with such enthusiasm. When you go home, give everyone my warmest thanks; follow the advice and guidance of your leaders amongst the nobility and do not believe the nonsensical and absurd rumours and talk of redistribution of land, free donations of plots and suchlike. These rumours are being spread by our enemies. All property, just the same as yours, must be inviolable. May God give you happiness and health.

Placed within the main picture frame, between us and the picture, these words are received by, and are indeed addressed to, the viewer. The main frame closes the space occupied by the words and the visual image: we read the inscription, and by doing so automatically participate in what is taking place in the picture. The function of the inscription is to return us to the picture but not to forget the frame or the space around it. The frame proclaims that it is a picture too, but in another medium – that of ornament, in which visual and linguistic symbols are intentionally placed side by side. The content of the painting and the text on the picture frame have mutual reference, sometimes as commentary, sometimes as illustration. The frame serves as a transition from verbal to visual space.

The inner frame surrounding the words of the monarch can be interpreted in a further way – as a pedestal or podium for the emperor; one more step, and he will come out of the frame. But this never happens. It is the emperor's speech inscribed on the frame that moves out into our real world, that begins to be physically present in another space, a space nearer the viewer; it serves as an intermediate link, summoned to regulate events both real and imaginary – those that take place beyond the picture frame, inside the picture. For the words placed on the frame are as always an indicator, an invitation to personal involvement, the first step towards formulation of the meaning of the whole composition. Therefore, reading the text on the frame, the viewer is led back to the picture once more. The words of the emperor take us across the frame again, and offer us a place amongst the people by the emperor's side. The effect is assisted and even made inevitable by the passage formed by the parting of the two groups of figures in the foreground, and strengthened by the bright light and the ground colour, harmonizing closely with the hue of the gilt frame.

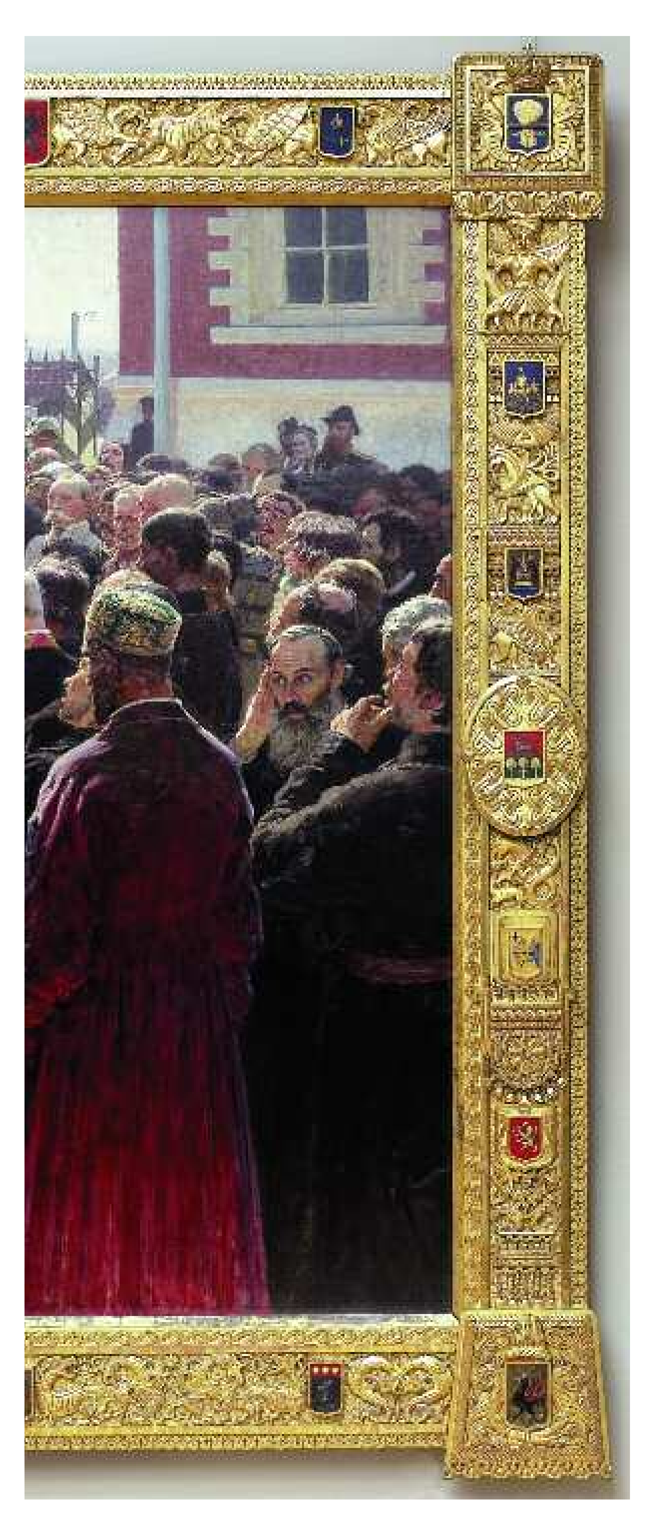
In this movement from bottom to top the viewer's eye again meets the frame, the centre of

its upper part displaying the arms of the Russian Empire, clearly establishing a symbolic link along the axis: speech – emperor – coat of arms. The speech, addressed to the people in the picture and to the viewer simultaneously, obliges the latter to enter the picture and stand before the emperor, who personifies the state, symbolized by the coat of arms surmounted by a crown. The whole effect of the frame, however, works on the viewer's eye in the opposite direction, from the top downwards along the same axis: coat of arms – emperor – speech. And then it seems as if it is not the viewer but the emperor who has to step over the frame and his own words contained within its space – and that this will be only the first step upon his way. We alternate between immersing ourselves in the picture and what is taking place there and leaving it to return to the space that surrounds the scene, looking slowly over the whole and connecting what is to be seen on the frame with the content of the painting. Now that the frame significantly enters our visual perception of the work, we are led to examine it not in a vertical direction but looking round it, clockwise.

The viewer's eye is caught by the brightly coloured coats of arms



137 *Emperor Alexander* III *Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts.* Detail showing the central portion.



138 Detail of the frame.

of all the lands and provinces of the Russian Empire, composing the *ornament* of the picture frame, threaded along it like jewels in the gold cladding of an icon. And they are indeed the jewels on the imperial crown, displayed as visual symbols of the title of the emperor, including the two-headed eagle, the emperor's *full name*. A name always expresses its own meaning. The ways in which naming relates to what and who is named is in the present case the most important aspect of reception. The use to which a name is put is an essential side of the cognitive activity of the viewer's eye. And here aesthetics maximally converges with politics.

The beauty of this picture frame is tantamount to the beauty of the imperial title, embracing the concept of the unity of the Russian Empire. It is here that the frame contains heightened cognitive interest for the eye, which must relate the coats of arms to the volost leaders who surround the emperor and read the symbolic links between them. The coats of arms on the frame convey that the volost leaders are representative of the whole Russian people and of all the lands making up the Russian Empire. In other words, the ornament on the frame is a garland of symbols with reference to the state, a heraldic image of the state, and the title of the emperor displayed in visual form. These symbols encompass not only the specific historical event that took place on 21 May 1883 in the courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace in Moscow, but also a mythological space and time evocative of the whole complex of ideas connected with the building of the Russian Empire and of Moscow as the Third Rome. This is confirmed by other ornamental elements with allusions to the Bible and folk mythology. In particular, the fantastic beasts



belong to the order of griffons, dragons and basilisks frequently found in Russian manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with ornamental teratological motifs (illus. 139), and which also occur on the exteriors of Early Russian churches, for example the cathedral of St George in Yur'yev-Pol'sky. All these fantastic beasts, according to popular tradition, lived at the edge of the earth, the meeting-point of the sky and the earth, in that far-off unknown realm in search of which the supernatural heroes of Russian folk tales so often set out on their expeditions. The boats depicted on either side of the imperial coat of arms at the top of the frame could belong either to these mythological personages or to the historical Varangian warriors, setting out to acquire the Russian lands and to discover Holy Rus', the mythological land of universal prosperity and peace.

At the same time, if Repin's painting imitated reality, its frame divided it, subdivided it and articulated it, and indicated that the picture space was to be interpreted differently according to whether it was to be considered as from a divine or a human viewpoint. It was the frame, executed in close symbolic relationship with the St George, St Alexander and St Andrew halls in the Great Kremlin Palace, that carried the image of the emperor into a mythological context. Furthermore, the picture and its frame hanging in the Antechamber acted as a window into the spaces of the ceremonial halls, as is borne out by the very construction of the frame. On the one hand, the frame drew together the monumental ceiling of the Antechamber and the wall on which the painting hung, its flat form, embellished with griffons and the like, facilitating this function; and on the other hand, it imitated the form of the window surrounds of a Russian *izba*, in this adopting the rhetoric of the 'common home' of national autocracy and orthodoxy. Through this 'window' the visitor saw an idealized Russia: as he or she walked through the ceremonial halls, with their repeated depictions of the coats of arms of the lands and provinces of the Russian Empire, the visitor became immersed in the wondrous atmosphere of merged history and myth. In the Antechamber an image of the emperor met the eye (illus. 140), but in the St Andrew Hall, or Throne Hall, one met his living person (illus. 143). In other words, if Repin's painting in its frame told the viewer that the state of Alexander III was built on the ideal of the unity of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality, then the architectural decoration of the ceremonial halls, where the living emperor and images of him constantly came face to face and at the same time related to all that surrounded them in the palace, was ample testimony of this.

The Antechamber where Repin's painting hung, with the St George, St Alexander, St Andrew

139 Ornamental headpiece from a Gospel book, 1409. Pskov.

overleaf: 140 Main staircase at the Great Kremlin Palace, showing Repin's *Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts* in the Antechamber.





and St Vladimir halls, was the setting for coronation ceremonies. It was here that the last Russian monarchs were crowned: Alexander II in 1856, Alexander III in 1883, and Nicholas II in 1896. By tradition, each of these halls had its special use. Those of highest military ranks assembled in the St George Hall; civil servants, local government officials and representatives of the nobility in the St Alexander Hall; and in the St Andrew Hall (Throne Hall) were the emperor and empress and members of the imperial family, members of the State Council and leading members of the nobility. Finally, in the St Vladimir Hall a company from the Alexander Military School and four platoons of Moscow cadets assembled. In all these halls an idealized portrayal of the orthodox monarchy was to be found; the decorative detail throughout was a powerful demonstration that the construction and the might of the Russian Empire enjoyed divine protection and that emperor, state and people constituted a mystic unity. This conception of the orthodox polity was revealed in the very names of the halls, which were dedicated to the principal national orders, bearing the names of those saints particularly associated with the history of the Russian state.

An order was a mark of service to the sovereign and the state, but the association of an order with a saint was not only a symbol of this or that saint's patronage of activities for the benefit of the fatherland, but also a special symbol for the principle of orthodoxy determining the course of Russian history. Hence in each of the halls, Repin's painting and its frame found many analogous meanings to explicate and enrich them, chief among them that springing from religious ideology. Thus the St George Hall was dedicated to the order of St George, long revered by the Russian people as a valiant and glorious warrior (illus. 141). His image adorned the coat of arms of Moscow, whose patron saint he was, and also the arms of the Russian Empire. St George was therefore depicted next to the most conspicuous point on our frame, the national coat of arms at the top. Two bas-reliefs of the saint by P. K. Klodt were incorporated in the stucco mouldings on the south and north walls of the St George Hall, presenting the saint's image to the public eye in magnified form.

In comparison with the other ceremonial halls, the St George Hall had a markedly memorial character, in keeping with its function as a sanctified 'shrine' in glorification of Russian arms; and this was clearly seen in the design of walls and ceiling. The unusual paleness of the walls was the effect of a continuous series of white memorial plaques on which names of distinguished army units and warship crews and lists of holders of the St George Cross from 1769 to 1885 were inscribed in gold lettering. Among the many names recorded with the St George Cross and the motto 'For service and bravery', those of Suvorov, Kutuzov, Bagration, Ushakov and Nakhimov were to be seen. But the names of living heroes also adorned the walls, on which St George Crosses and ribbons of the order everywhere echoed the overall architectural design.

Though the St George Hall was conceived as a shrine to military valour, the idea of glorification of the monarch and the building of empire was not forgotten there. Above each list of holders of the St George Cross were monograms of the Russian autocrats: E II, P I, A I, N I, A II, A III, N II. They signified that the history of the Russian Empire was to be understood as the history of the linear progress of the state, expressed in the successive



reigns of Russian monarchs. They testified that every military victory of the Russian people had been won not only during the reign of this or that monarch but also under that monarch's personal patronage. At this point the memorial theme was combined with the triumphal. The vaulted ceiling of the hall rested on eighteen massive piers with attached columns, nine on each side. The triumphal idea was embodied in the sculptor Ivan Vitali's allegorical figures of *Victory* placed upon the entablatures, holding shields displaying the coats of arms of the Russian tsars and territories with dates of conquests. On the shield of the first of these statues, at the entrance of the hall, was the date 1472, the year of the conquest of Perm', and on that of the last 1828, the date of the annexation of Armenia. We have already seen these coats of arms on the frame of the picture in the Antechamber of the palace. Now the history of the growth of the empire represented on the frame of Repin's painting acquires a more visible outline and is fleshed out with triumphal subject matter.

The triumphal idea has been symbolized by armour since antiquity. On our frame it is represented not only by the shield bearing the imperial coat of arms but also by the Varangian motifs, the stylized boats lined with warriors launched on a campaign to acquire the Russian territories represented by the coats of arms seen round the frame. These boats are being launched in different directions from the centre of the upper part of the frame, clearly, once they have made their long

141 St George Hall, Great Kremlin Palace, 1838–49; architect Konstantin Ton.

historical journey, to be reunited on the spot where the words of Emperor Alexander III are displayed. In the decorative scheme of the ceremonial halls armaments and weaponry featured with more variety, in motifs of banners, shields, helmets, arrows, guns and shot, symbolizing almost the entire history of Russian arms, from the earliest times up to the era of Nicholas I, Alexander II and Alexander III. In this scheme clocks with ornamental sculptural groups were prominent. The bases of such clocks were ornamented with depictions of various kinds of armament acting as symbolic framing, complementing and commenting on the meaning of the corresponding sculpture above, for example, portrayals of St George the dragon-killer and popular champion of justice, and of Minin and Pozharsky, liberators of Russia from the Polish-Lithuanian invaders, by the firm of Nichols and Plinke after designs by the sculptor Alexander Loganovsky (1812–55). The 'framing' clock bases not only inseparably linked the sculptural images with each other but also, placed against the memorial panels bearing the names of military units and of holders of the St George Cross and monograms of emperors, lent these a triumphal meaning.

In the next hall, walls, ceiling, floor, windows and door all created a special atmosphere and contributed to a perception of the greatness of the Russian monarchy. This hall was dedicated to the military order of Alexander Nevsky, founded in 1725 by Empress Elizabeth I with the motto 'For services and country'. Whereas in the St George Hall the emphasis of the decorative setting was sculptural and verbal, in the Alexander Hall the focus was on paintings, emblems and mirrors. The story of Alexander III's patron saint was told in detail in a series of framed paintings on the walls by Fyodor Moller (1812–75) depicting episodes from the life of Alexander Nevsky, such as *Papal Envoys from Rome Convert Alexander Nevsky to Catholicism*, *Marriage of Alexander Nevsky to Alexandra, Daughter of the Prince of Polotsk* and *Alexander, in Battle with the Swedes, Strikes the Enemy Leader Birger with his Spear*. These depictions were backed up by gilded allegorical sculptural figures by Alexander Loganovsky. Above the entrance doors were two representations of Alexander Nevsky (one as a prince, the other having taken monastic vows), which stood as the beginning and the end of the story that the viewer would read in the paintings on



142 St Alexander Hall, Great Kremlin Palace, 1838–49; mid-19th-century engraving.

the walls.[5] These paintings were clearly to be understood in the context of the struggle waged for faith and fatherland by the leading patron saint of the Russian warrior; whereas St George belonged to the whole Christian world, St Alexander Nevsky was the chief hero of the mythology of the Russian state, standing at the very beginning of the military campaign to build the Russian Empire. In the design of the cupola of the hall this message was given tangible form by the sacred monogram of the order, SA (Sanctus Alexander), incorporated in gilt bas-reliefs. And in the corners of the cupola the state coat of arms reappeared, the two-headed eagle with the imperial crown, and between gilded twisted columns, the coats of arms of the lands and provinces of Russia, as seen in the St George Hall and on the frame of Repin's painting in the Antechamber. All this 'almost barbarian abundance of lustre' (in the words of an eyewitness) was achieved and strengthened by the dramatic play of light through the windows on the south side. Meeting the mirrors on doors and windows of the opposite wall, light flooded the hall with reflected images: floor, windows, pictures, symbols of orders on walls and on people – everything was suddenly reflected in everything else, stirring the viewer's imagination.

One more step, into the next hall, and the picture would reach its culmination. In the Throne Hall (St Andrew Hall) the visitor would come face to face with a living icon: the emperor himself (illus. 143). But the entrant was first prepared by the framing of



143 St Andrew Hall, Great Kremlin Palace, 1838–49.

the doorway (illus. 142). This was an elaborate portal resembling both a triumphal arch and an Empire-style Russian iconostasis. Seeing these doors, no one could fail to be reminded of the 'royal doors' of the high iconostasis – similar to those from the first half of the nineteenth century, with classical pediment and Empire-style side columns, which we have already met with. When first glimpsed through half-opened doors, the throne and its setting were reminiscent of the design of the throne with canopy and altar seen in the engraving of the St Alexander Hall shown above. However, above the entrance to the Throne Hall one saw not a religious representation of the Last Supper (as discussed earlier), but the coat of arms of the Russian Empire, the two-headed eagle with the imperial crown, as depicted on the frame of Repin's picture. There the crown was shown above an image of the emperor, but in the framing of the entrance to the Throne Hall it was seen above the living person of the emperor. It was to the imperial figure that the line of sight was drawn, emerging in the doorway as the doors of the St Alexander Hall slowly opened. We may recall that the doors of the Antechamber gradually revealed the image of the emperor to anyone ascending the stairway. The doors opening into the Throne Hall presented a real-life scene from the 'theatre of power'. What met the eye was the sacred heart of the empire established by God, and the whole design of the wall at the centre of which the throne was set conveyed just this. Its hemispherical upper part took the form of the upper segment of a rotunda, with a representation of the All-Seeing Eye of God. 'The architecture of the St Andrew Throne Hall, with its pointed vaulting, two rows of square piers and the All-Seeing Eye of God in rays of light above the imperial throne,' the historian S. P. Bartenev observed in the last days of the tsarist era, 'is reminiscent of a church, thus marking the sacred dignity of tsarist power.'[6]

The sacredness of the Throne Hall was indicated by its dedication to St Andrew, one of the apostles and brother of St Peter, baptizer of heathen Rome, in his Russian version. The tradition of St Andrew as the baptizer of Rus' and founder of a new, Third Rome/Muscovite tsardom ruled by an Orthodox monarch emerged during the formation of the Muscovite tsardom in the sixteenth century. From the reign of Peter the Great, the cult of Andrew the First-called (*protokletos* in the early Byzantine tradition) took on a new dimension in that the Russian tsar claimed to be the heir of the apostle Andrew, now patron saint of Rus' – the Third Rome.[7] On 10 March 1698 Peter founded the Order of Andrew the First-called with the monogram SAPR (*Sanctus Andreas Patronus Russiae*) and the motto 'For faith and loyalty'. In the formula 'Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality' the nineteenth-century Russian tsars claimed to be the successors of the rulers of Muscovy. In the Throne Hall this idea was clearly expressed in the baldachin above the imperial throne, which echoed the canopy over the 'Tsar's Place' of Ivan the Terrible in the cathedral of the Dormition (illus. 144): it was tent-shaped, with the imperial coat of arms on the front facet, and was borne on four twisted columns in symbolic reference to the Temple of Solomon – signifying wisdom and strength – and surmounted with the symbols of the Order of St Andrew, two-headed eagles and the St Andrew's (decussate) cross, representing the death and glory of the apostle. The capitals of the columns were repeated throughout the Throne Hall, with unified significance symbolic of the power of empire. Like



144 'Tsar's Place' of Ivan IV, *c.* 1551, Dormition Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin.

the preceding St Alexander Hall, the Throne Hall received light in daytime through two rows of windows, and it was illuminated in the evenings by ten bronze chandeliers, with hoops ornamented with the two-headed eagle and the symbols of the Order of St Andrew. On the wall opposite the main windows were doors with mirrors and more windows.

Finally, the decorative scheme of all the ceremonial halls included the symbols and coloured ribbons of the orders, planned by the architects to link architecture with the dress of living people. Thus the heraldic ornamentation of the frame of Repin's painting *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts* was repeated and developed not only in the architecture of the St George and St Alexander halls but also in the ceremonial atmosphere of the principal hall, the Throne Hall, its ornamental scheme embodying the religio-political idea of the national unity of the Russian Empire. This ideal of unity was coded in symbolic terms of Slavic nationalism: gilded articles of early Slavic armour clearly corresponded with the 'Varangian' ships depicted on the frame of Repin's picture in the Antechamber, and lent a triumphal air to all the halls.

After 1917 everything changed. Repin's picture disappeared from the Antechamber, and from 1950 to 1991 its place was taken, as already mentioned, by a painting from the studio of Boris Ioganson (1893–1973), *Vladimir Lenin Speaking at the Third Komsomol Congress* (illus. 145). The style and symbolism of the new picture dictated fundamentally different analogues in its architectural setting. Between 1932 and 1934 the St Alexander and St Andrew halls were demolished and replaced by the Hall of Congresses, used for meetings of the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the RSFSR (illus. 146). Since the painting from Ioganson's studio was not put on display until nearly two decades after the Hall of Congresses was built, there is every reason to suppose that it was conceived specially for its place on the wall of the Antechamber, crucial as



it is for an understanding of the whole spatial-symbolic scheme of the Great Kremlin Palace complex. And indeed, a comparison between this painting and Repin's yields interesting results.

In the Ioganson picture the figure of the emperor is replaced by that of the leader of the world's proletariat, and the heads of the volosts by the Komsomol members who have journeyed to Moscow from all parts of the Soviet Union. The figure of Emperor Alexander III was placed in the centre of the painting, and was static. The figure of Lenin is dynamic: as he speaks he is teaching, pointing the way, his gaze is directed straight ahead, the link with the heavens is emphatically lost. And the people? The delegates to the congress do not simply take in the words of their leader, they listen to him with rapt attention, faces showing their living response. As in Repin's painting, the speaker is surrounded by his listeners, but with one significant difference. Whereas the emperor stood on the ground, Lenin seems to stand on a platform, serving as an open tribune, raising him above his listeners. This tribune effect provides a frame for the depiction of the leader and his audience.

145 Studio of Boris Ioganson, *Vladimir Lenin Speaking at the Third Komsomol Congress*, 1950. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

The socialist realist painting represents, once again, a utopian world of ideal harmony. It submits to a new normative aesthetic the rules of which are no longer laid down by the artist but by the autocrat – Lenin (or Stalin). The autocrat is now the possessor of the aesthetic idea that previously belonged to the artist, inasmuch as it is he who lays down the canon for the new visual image. He may reject one or another image as failing to correspond to his plans for the transformation of the material world. The artist is allotted the role of mere illustrator for the new political project. As a result, the socialist realist depiction enacting the Stalinist experience became an instrument of hypnosis, often functioning like an advertisement; it was a species of simulacrum, or more exactly a falsified image actively formulating imagined reality. Consequently, its connection with its frame and architectural setting displayed qualitatively new features.

At first glance, the frame did not appear to be part of the artistic purpose of Ioganson's studio. There seemed to be no play with the content of the painting. Its function appeared to consist purely in presenting the picture to the viewer, sharpening the limits of the picture area and making it clearer and more distinct, heightening its impact as a colourful patch on the wall. However, as in the case



146 Hall of Congresses of the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and RSFSR, Great Kremlin Palace, 1932–4; architect Illarion Ivanov-Shits.

of Repin's painting, it was actually calculated to relate the depicted scene to the architectural style of the Hall of Congresses, that is, it not only picked the painting out from the surrounding wall but through its Neoclassical decoration also linked it to the new interior (illus. 146). The frame of this socialist realist work could carry Neoclassical decoration – acanthus leaves, laurel sprigs and the like – and at the same time Soviet symbolism, which always linked images with the new state mythology.

The new Hall of Congresses was designed in the official state style, Stalinist Empire, by the architect Illarion Ivanov-Shits (1865–1937). As with the other visual arts, Neoclassical architecture of the time was called upon to demonstrate the grand ideas of the greatest architect, Lenin (or Stalin). It was also part of the programme of return to a Graeco-Roman ideal. Features of classical architecture and pagan mythology were interestingly interwoven in the Hall of Congresses with Soviet ideology and twentieth-century functionalism, and elements of the antique – niches, columns, arches, cornices and so on – had major significance in its design.

The alcove, for example, was a sacralized space carrying not a few symbolic allusions. The temple of antiquity usually contained a statue of a divinity or hero. In the alcove at the far wall of the Hall of Congresses, above the praesidium seats, was placed a statue of Lenin (1939) by the well-known Soviet sculptor Sergey Merkurov (1881–1952) for which a death mask was used. Thus the huge figure of Lenin took command over the whole hall, and at times it seemed as if the leader of the world proletariat might come out of the alcove and take part in proceedings in the hall. Reverence for this statue bore all the hallmarks of religious worship: for totalitarianism always 'sought one way or another to resurrect the pagan past, excising its mythological or poetic presentiments'.[8]

The weight and significance Lenin's statue had for the entire hall was enhanced by further details of the architectural setting. A projecting cornice supported by two pillars with Corinthian capitals distanced the figure in the alcove from the members of the preasidium and created the feeling of a church, an effect to which six pillars further contributed, three on each side of the statue of Lenin. Moreover, the projecting cornice was repeated on the rear wall itself, dividing it into two, the upper part consisting of an arch and the lower of the alcove with the centrally placed statue of Lenin. The All-Seeing Eye in the arch of the former Throne Hall was replaced by the coat of arms of the USSR.

On this same vertical axis the eye took in the clock and the statue, a symbolic whole being formed, with the coat of arms, clock and statue emblematic of the new era in human history. The praesidium seats were set on either side of a large table, looking down and out into the hall, reminiscent of a multi-stepped pediment of living people, with the statue of Lenin rising above them. And the chairman of the preasidium, speaking on the tribune, was located on the very same axis as the Soviet coat of arms, the clock and the statue of Lenin, creating a mythological model of the socialist state.

Thus everything seen in the Ioganson painting corresponded in essence with what took place in the architectural space of the Hall of Congresses, which the picture correlated with events that had taken place in the hall at the beginning of the history of the Soviet state founded by Lenin, and the chairman of the praesidium, standing on the

tribune of the Hall of Congresses that had replaced the imperial throne in the former St Andrew Hall, was taken for his living analogue.

The tribune as a setting for a political leader received, of course, special theoretical interpretation and artistic treatment at the hands of Soviet artists from 1920 to 1930. In the field of graphic art it is sufficient to remember El Lissitzky's well-known sketch of Lenin on his tribune, and in architecture the Palace of Soviets and the Lenin Mausoleum, which were designed as tribunes, pedestals and 'shrines'. The architects had the idea of crowning the huge multi-tiered Palace of Soviets with a 75-metre-high statue of Lenin, while the Mausoleum, designed by Aleksey Shchusev (1873–1949), was conceived as a memorial to a dead leader – the principal tribune of the nation, from which the Soviet leaders ruled its people.

The Rhetoric of Title

In ancient Rome the word *titulus* denoted a short inscription in a shrine or on a statue. Inscriptions on tombs were called *tituli sepulcrales*. The Latin word translates as 'name', 'designation' or 'title'. Here lies the origin of the title of emperor, for example. The *titulus* was a form of address used towards God, a monarch or a distinguished person. Ordinary people had no *titulus*. Specialists have studied the different forms of naming and addressing Russian monarchs and highlighted their connection with sacred semantics.[9] And the history of the palatial frame offers us all kinds of visual equivalents of such forms of address. Thus the symbolism of the frame of Repin's painting in the Antechamber of the Great Kremlin Palace involves not only ideas and images of Moscow as the Third Rome but also embodies a visual equivalent of the displayed title of the Russian emperor. And to the extent, as Vladimir Solovyov has noted, 'that grand titles, when not self-aggrandizing, are symbols of historical tasks', they repay study for the specific cultural meanings they contain.[10]

At a cursory glance, the eye would often be caught in a net of cunningly placed symbols. From the dawn of history, the title of a monarch or leader, like the name of God, was of prime importance in human portrayals. In human consciousness a title was inseparable from the identity of the person bearing it and could even stand in its place. Therefore, as has already been noted, a representation of Christ or a saint had to be accompanied by his name. Following the decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, it was naming that gave icons their force, that is, the inscription accompanying the 'portrait' of a saint. But in the genre of the official portrait the situation became more complex. A portrait of a monarch contained symbols of virtue that in time were supplemented by a monogram, that is, a variant of the name of the portrayed.

The title of 'tsar' first appears in early Rus' in the reign of Ivan III. The word *tsar'* is derived from *Caesar*, the title used by Roman emperors after Augustus and then by Christian rulers following them. Ivan IV (the Terrible, *reg* 1533–84) had every right to have himself crowned tsar in 1547, and it was from this time that the term became the official title of the Russian monarch; accompanying depictions of the monarch, it embarked on a long historical journey during which it found expression in innumerable written and visual forms. And it is important to note that in the course of this journey the title's authenticity in visual terms evolved in

direct dependence not only on the history of Russian autocracy itself but also on the Western Latin rhetorical tradition already discussed in connection with Russian Baroque icons. A prime example comes from the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth, when the depiction of the two-headed eagle (that is, the visual title taken over from the Holy Roman Empire) was increasingly accompanied by tsarist and imperial regalia and also by the monarch's name in the form of a monogram. That is to say, the single universal title of Russian monarchs acquired a changed visual formula: the monarch's monogram became a rhetorical addition and as it were a symbolic framing for the two-headed eagle, the universal part of the emperor's title. Consequently, from the second half of the seventeenth century the Russian palatial painting frame began to communicate with the viewer in European post-Renaissance cultural terms. The rhetoric of the imperial title determined the ornament on the frame, which evolved within the mainstream of the eulogistic tradition. Furthermore, the form taken by the naming of the depicted figure on the frame created the 'reason for the existence' of the painting, which flowed from the structure of the name itself.[11]

In this connection, the ornamentation on the palatial frame, taking in monograms, imperial regalia, coats of arms, all kinds of symbols of the tsar's virtue and power, was inseparably linked with oral and literary forms of address towards the sovereign. These are conspicuous in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century detailed descriptions of coronation ritual, and become more and more grand and high-flown in style as expressed in the numerous homilies, odes and speeches that were essential elements of the 'theatre of power' to which official portraits belonged. As in official literary genres, ornament and design of the frame of an imperial portrait could discreetly contain a religious motif conveying divine protection of tsarist or imperial power, giving the image of the emperor iconic treatment. For example, the poet Vasiliy Petrov's ode 'On the Ceremonial Arrival of His Imperial Majesty Paul I in Moscow' (1797) contains a conceit of angels holding a portrait of the emperor as an image of God Himself:

> Here delicate Alexander, and there
> Constantine holds your sacred frame.
> Here are Your Angels, nearest to the throne;
> You are Divine, and they bear Your image below.[12]

At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries angels were likewise depicted bearing



147 Louis-Michel van Loo(?), *Empress Elizabeth*, *c.* 1750.



148 Cartouche with the monogram of Elizabeth I in the Dormition Cathedral of the Goritsky Monastery, 1759.

heavenwards monarchs' coats of arms and monograms in cartouches, and not only on picture frames, in palace ceiling paintings and in all kinds of apotheosis scenes, but also even in the decorative schemes of church walls. Thus on the upper part of the elaborate frame of the portrait of Empress Elizabeth attributed to Louis-Michel van Loo, angels hold a cartouche with her monogram (illus. 147). Their feet cross the edge of the frame, which this author takes to serve as a symbolic link between name and image: holding up the empress's monogram, the angels also hold up her portrait. To the same period belongs a cartouche with the monogram of Elizabeth I (*reg* 1741–62) held up by the Archangels Gabriel and Michael on the wall of the cathedral of the Dormition in the Goritsky Monastery, Pereslavl-Zalessky (1759, illus. 148), a typical example of converging aesthetic and symbolic decorative approaches in palaces and churches, a similar composition being found in a number of stucco and painted ceilings of the second half of the eighteenth century. 'The most beautiful part of the ceiling of the first antechamber,' writes Alexander Benua of the decorative work at the palace at Tsarskoye Selo surviving from the period of Elizabeth, 'is the painted frame and the small, mosaic-like motifs inside it.'[13] This frame also contains a cartouche with the monogram of Catherine I and the Russian imperial coat of arms surrounded by angels and allegorical figures expressing glorification of the whole composition.[14] The foregoing might offer grounds for suggesting that a literary analogue for a palatial painting frame might be



found in the panegyric, a graphic one in the Baroque colophon of the second half of the seventeenth century and first half of the eight - eenth, and an architectural one in the triumphal arch.

In 1683 a studio was set up in the Moscow Kremlin quite separate from the icon-painting workshop, in which official portraits of Russian monarchs and service aristocracy (*parsuny*) were painted under the direction of foreign masters. Quite probably it was at this time that the first family galleries were founded in Russia, long after those in Western European countries. In dynastic portrait galleries 'spaces of honour' were accommodated, usually in throne and reception halls and rooms devoted to the nobility, but sometimes in special rooms of their own. The conception of a collection of family portraits was realized in the *Titulyarnik*, a genealogical series of portraits ordered from masters of the Armoury Palace by Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich (*reg* 1645–76) and painted in 1673.

The carved and painted wooden frames of the Russian *parsuny* that decorated halls and chambers of the second half of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eigh- teenth could have been made in the Armoury workshop where icon frames were produced. With some caution, these portraits may be considered as modified and diverg- ing forms of the iconic depictions discussed in the first chapter of this book. It is hardly surprising that the *parsuny* at the tombs in the cathedral of the Archangel in the Moscow Kremlin are painted on icon boards, their flat form maintaining Russian iconic tradition. In some cases the composition of *parsuny* of the second half of the seventeenth century depicting Aleksey show points of derivation

149 *Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich*, 1670s–80s. State Historical Museum, Moscow.



from the icon of *Christ Pantocrator*, not only because the depictions of Christ and the Russian tsar maintain the regalia of Byzantine emperors (sakkos and mitre-crown) but also because of compositional detail on frames taken from Western European engravings. In accordance with the new Western rhetoric and aesthetic, the early Russian *parsuna* converges with other Western art forms, including paintings, icons, miniatures and engravings. Not the least part in this convergence is played by the frame. A typical example is an equestrian portrait of Tsar Aleksey Mickaylovich painted by the masters of the Armoury Palace in the late 1670s or early 1680s under the influence of Western European portraiture. At the same time, the inscription on the painting itself ('The Devout Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksey Autocrat of all Great and Little and White Russia') displays a closeness to the icon, and the gold background and gold-painted frame with depictions of precious stones derives from both the icon and the miniature (illus. 149). The same is true of the frame of the portrait of Patriarch Nikon attributed to a German painter Hans Deterson from the Monastery of the Resurrection at New Jerusalem (illus. 150). The decorative forms of ingots or precious stones on the flat wooden frame make it look like the frame of an icon. There is every reason to suppose that this is one of the early portrait frames made in the workshops of the Armoury Palace.

Now the Western European palatial portrait frame enters Russian court culture. Evidence of this is seen in seventeenth-century inventories of the estate of Prince V. V. Golitsyn mentioning portraits of British, Polish, Swedish and Danish monarchs.[15] A little later, royal portraits appeared on Alexander Menshikov's estate of Novo-Alekseyevskoye, where 'the first room' contained 'three paintings, including two portraits of foreign kings in gilt frames'.[16] Finally, 'portraits in flat gilded frames with the same stamp at the top and with painted monograms' are mentioned in inventories of the Sheremetev portrait gallery in Kuskovo, which, judging from its reconstruction, must have

150 Hans Deterson(?), *Patriarch Nikon*, *c.* 1655.



been one of the most important Russian country estate galleries of the eighteenth century.[17] It follows, therefore, that the frame shown in an old photograph of a portrait of the Patriarch Filaret (illus. 151) may have been made by Russian craftsmen after Western European models, which appears more likely if this frame is compared with that of Velázquez's well-known portrait of the Duke of Olivarez in the Hermitage: the same type of ornamental mascaron appears on each. Compared with Western European palatial portrait frames of the time, Russian ones appear modest. Grape ornamentation on a frame dating from the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Kolomenskoye Museum is reminiscent of decorative painting on icon cases and iconostases (illus. 152).[18] In addition, on the upper part of this frame is the two-headed eagle, the universal part of the monarch's title, indicating that the frame belonged to a portrait of the tsar. The two-headed eagle gives it a special panegyric significance; as a traditional symbol of Russian absolutism, it constantly occurs in Russian panegyric literature from Simeon Polotsky to Mikhail Lomonosov.[19]

With the establishment of Western European court ritual by Peter the Great, the rhetoric of title on the palatial portrait frame was to evolve more rapidly. There was an increasing tendency to place a crown on the upper part of the frame, relating to the figure portrayed. Along with coat of arms, monogram, regalia and trophies, the crown became one of the chief points of visual attraction in a portrait. Although it had been Tsar Aleksey who established the organized practice of heraldry in Russia, it was Peter the Great who set up the

151 *Patriarch Filaret*, second half of 17th century, in the House of the Romanov Boyars, Moscow.



152 Late 17th-century or early 18th-century frame. State Open-air Museum of Architectural History and Art 'Kolomenskoye', Moscow.

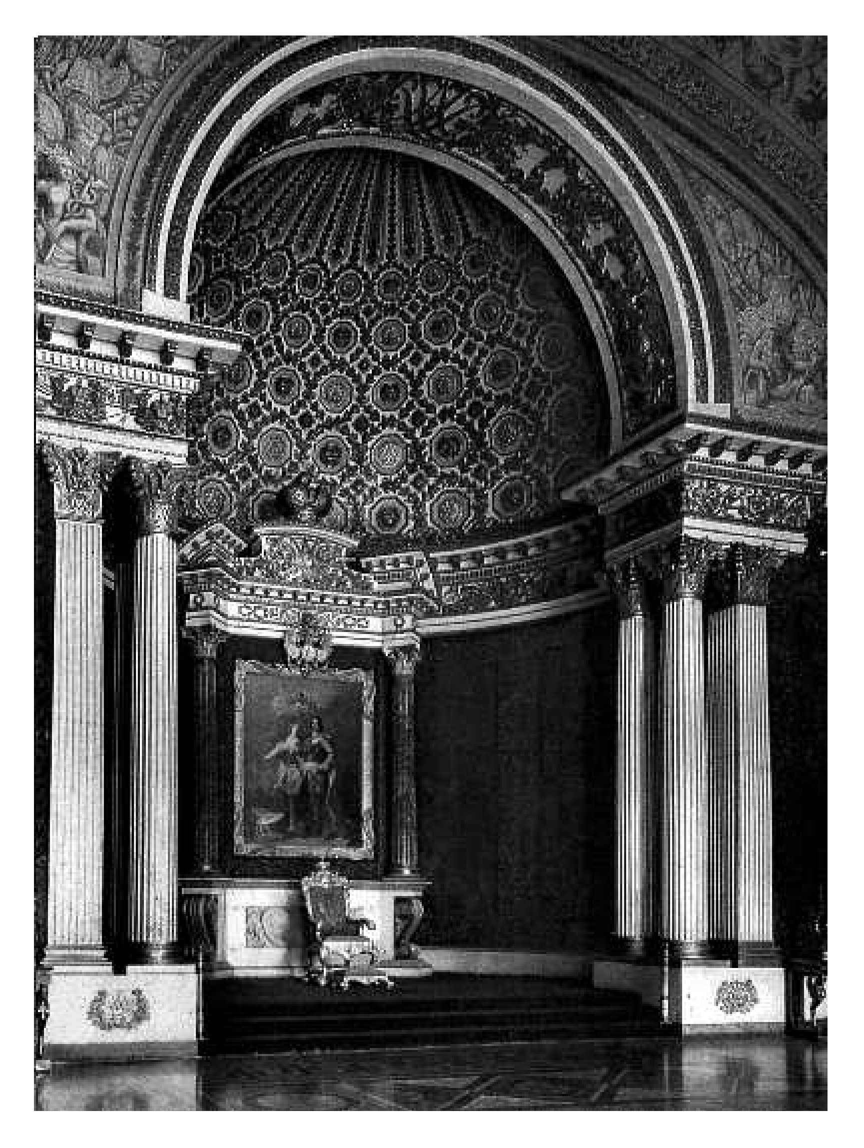


153 *Peter I*, *c.* 1775–1800. Museum-Estate 'Arkhangel'skoye', Moscow province.



154 Paul Delaroche, *Peter I*, 1838. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

so-called Herald-Master's Office, known as the Gerol'diya, with the function of representing the Russian nobility and creating coats of arms. And from this time right up to 1917, the visual titles of the emperor and the nobility found an unusual variety of decorative forms executed by Russian and foreign craftsmen alike.



It is especially interesting to compare these treatments on the frames of portraits of Peter. The frame for the portrait from the collection of the museum-estate of Arkhangels'koye, made by Russian craftsmen during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, has strikingly sober decoration despite being crowned with a cartouche bearing Peter's monogram surrounded by oak sprigs and regalia (illus. 153).[20] The frame for the portrait by the French artist Paul Delaroche (1797–1856), portraying the emperor in a wintry setting, has a wholly different kind of design (illus. 154). Imbued with panegyric sentiment, this frame not only 'names' the subject through the two-headed eagle and monogram, but gives the image a cryptic meaning concerned with the ideology of statehood. If the cannon and map in the painting symbolize the emperor's readiness to campaign for the good of his country, the ornament on the frame seems to assert the nobility of his actions. Symbols of abundance without any triumphal significance – grapes and vine leaves, pomegranates and pears, interwoven with ears of wheat, flowers and acanthus leaves – contribute to the image of the emperor as 'father of the fatherland', a wise and solicitous ruler.

The frame of the portrait of Peter the Great and Catherine I in the honorifically named Peter's Throne Room in the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, designed by Auguste-Ricard de Montferrand in 1833, is a special case, chiming not only with the architectural ornamentation of the hall, but also with the

155 Peter's Throne Room of 1833 (designed by Auguste-Ricard de Montferrand) in the Winter Palace, St Petersburg.

living figure of the emperor himself (illus. 155). The portrait is symbolically linked with first the throne and secondly the space around it, being placed in the alcove above the throne, in the manner of an altar painting in a Western church. It is doubly framed: the outer frame is provided by a marble tabernacle with elements of the classical orders, and the inner frame, the carved picture frame, harmonizes the painting with its entire surroundings. Thus the attributes of imperial power displayed in the double framing and the throne visually united the image and the living person of the emperor, that is, Nicholas I and his successors. The tabernacle was crowned with the imperial crown, below which the monogram of Peter the Great was displayed, and the portrait frame with the two-headed eagle. The throne itself, as the framing for the living figure of the emperor, repeated all these symbols. The throne and the frame of the imperial portrait were thus symbolically brought together as the principal framing elements of the imperial palace.[21]

In comparison with the imperial palace, the frames of portraits of the monarch in the palaces of the Russian aristocracy would be characterized by features corresponding to the relationship of the court magnate or other serving figure with





156 Nikolay Argunov's *Emperor Paul I,* 1797 on display in the Sheremetev Palace. Ostankino Museum, Moscow. Detail of the frame below.

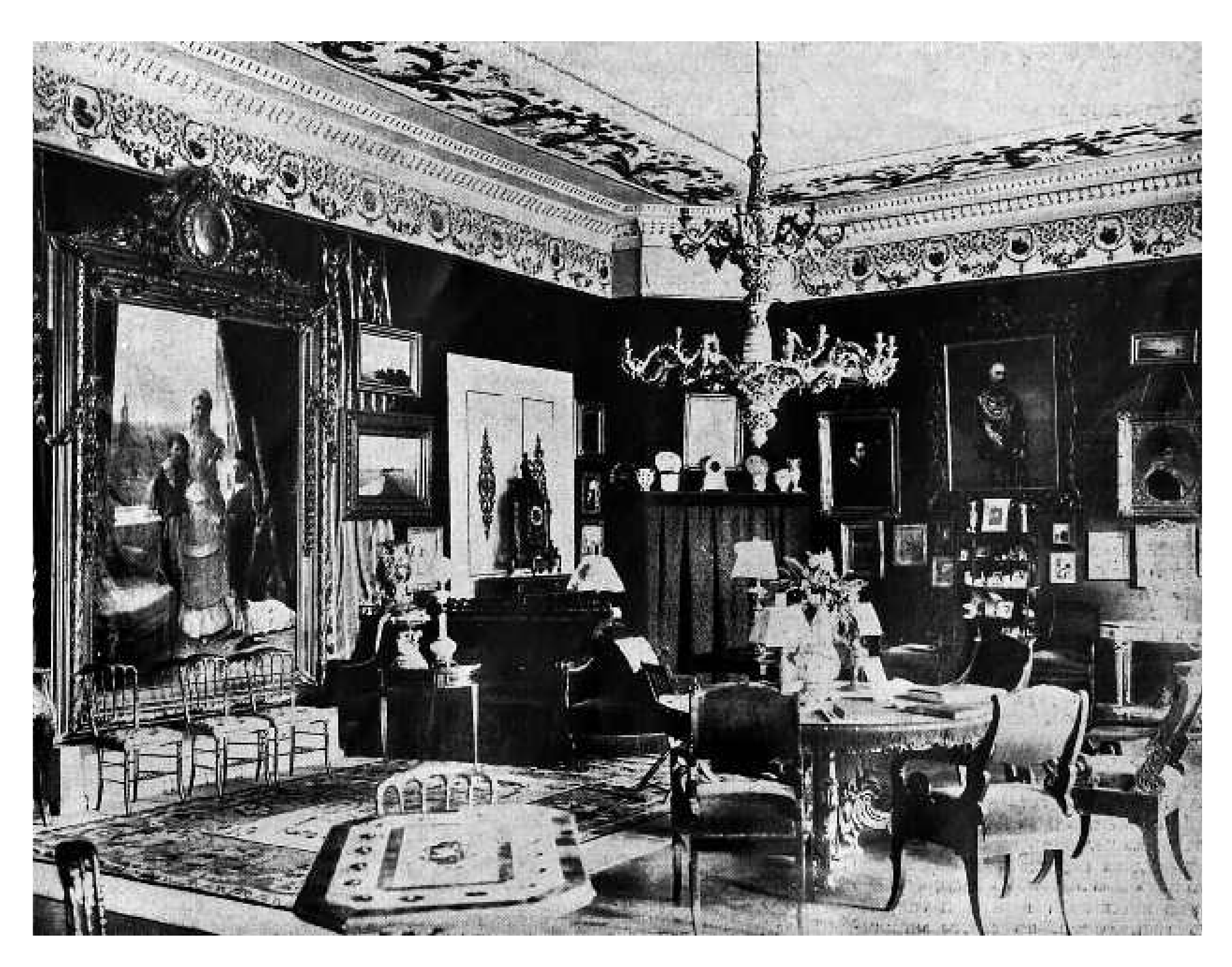


157 Fyodor Rokotov's *Empress Catherine II* in a late 18th-century frame.

the sovereign. Thus the frame of the coronation portrait of Paul I by the artist Nikolay Argunov (1771–1829)in the Sheremetev Palace at Ostankino, a celebrated focal point for the arts, was the conceptual centre of the furnishing and decoration of the entire palace (illus. 156). It was crowned with an eagle symbolizing the ruling monarch, the outstretched wings covering attributes of the sciences and arts. In the same way the frame characterized the figure of Paul I as a patron of the arts and sciences, as Sheremetev was himself – and the image of the emperor stands against a real-life background showing the furnishings of the drawing room in which the painting was to hang, creating the illusion of a framed 'live presence' of the emperor in Count Nikolay Sheremetev's palace.

Another interesting frame is that of a portrait of Catherine II by Fyodor Rokotov (1735–1808) in the house of one Nikolay Yeremeyevich Struysky in Penza province (illus. 157).[22] In this case the frame of the portrait, rather than characterizing the portrayed figure, expresses the reverence felt towards that figure by the owner of the portrait. At the top of the frame is the monogram of Catherine with the imperial crown, and on the lower part attributes of the arts and an opened book with Struysky's epistle addressed to the empress (for which he is reported to have been rewarded with a diamond ring). The frame is placed on a marble console supported by a sculptured two-headed eagle. Its originality is wholly within the bounds of the classical aesthetic, in which the association between painting, sculpture and poetry denoted inspiration. In the present case, the inspiration is attributed to the author of the epistle in reward for devoted service.

The frame can play a no less elucidatory role in the case of aristocratic portraits, not only bearing



coats of arms, titles and marks of distinction, but also employed to exalt the subject by all possible means – the use of ornament and pedestal, positioning and harmonization with the surrounding interior. Nikolay Ge's portrait of Countess Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Olsuf'yeva and her two sons is set in a grand armorial frame (illus. 158).[23] A photograph of the reception room of her house in Chernigov province shows the dominating position of the painting, standing on a plinth and with a covering curtain,[24] to be looked at only on special occasions, following the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western European tradition for displaying paintings (evident from Jan Steen's *Harpsichord Lesson*; *c.* 1660, Wallace Collection, London, which shows a picture half-concealed by a curtain). A curtain always gave special significance to court portraits, losing the sacred function derived from the icon and partaking rather of the nature of theatre, in which the opening and closing of a curtain plays an important role in the dramatic action.

A title was often displayed on a palatial portrait frame surrounded by trophies – antique or medieval

158 Nikolay Ge, *Countess Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Olsuf'yeva with her Sons*, photograph *c.* 1915.



159 Monogram of Emperor Peter I, framed with trophies on the box safe of Peter I, *c.* 1700–25. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

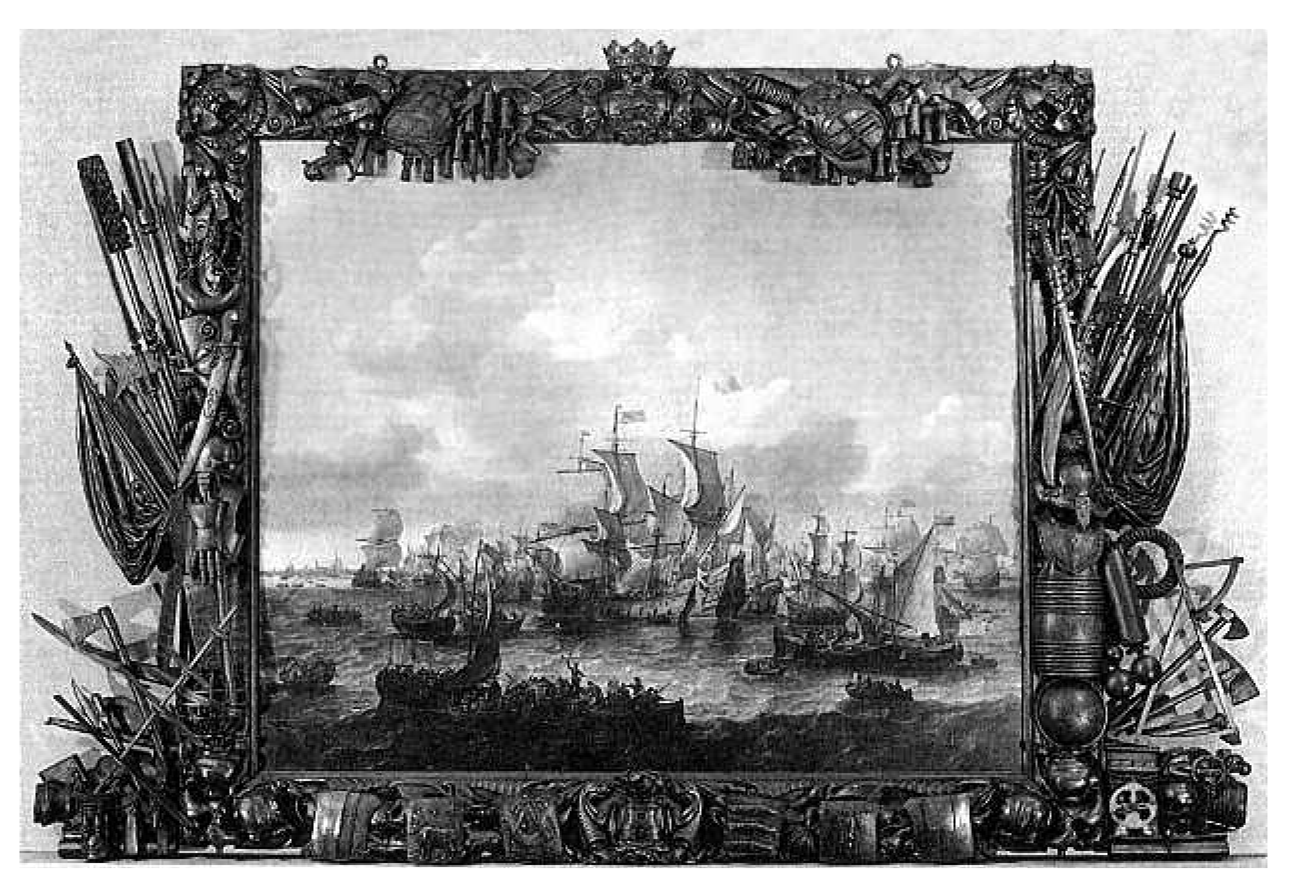
An early example of the Russian 'triumphal' frame surrounds the portrait of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich from the *Titulyarnik* of 1672 (illus. 160). After the manner of Western European engravings, it contains examples of Slavic weaponry, making the portrait distinctly triumphal. On the celebrated bas-relief of Peter the Great (1744; Tretyakov Gallery) by the sculptor Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli the triumphal theme had already been embodied in the symbolic linking of frame and image. At the top of this bas-relief of the emperor in armour at the battle of Poltava is a crown among laurel sprigs – symbolic since antiquity of an weapons or objects of military significance contemporaneous with the frame, such as Roman axes and quivers of arrows, military standards, cannon and shot, swords and rifles. Regalia depicted on a frame embodied the idea of continuity of power, while trophies always conveyed glorification and the idea of triumph. On objects of palace life of all kinds, the title of tsar or emperor with surrounding ornamental trophies stood as substantiated by military victory and heroic deeds for the benefit of the fatherland (illus. 159). But objects of court life are one thing, a portrait of a tsar another, and the frame for the latter related more closely to the portrait than to the environment of the subject; it was addressed to the viewer, whom its object was to impress with an idea of the scale of the tsar's power.



160 *Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich* from *Titulyarnik,* 1672. Russian State Archive of Early Documents, Moscow.

emperor, victor and hero – and also a decoratively depicted chain of the highest state honour, the Order of Andrew the First-called, which had become a component of the imperial regalia. Thus the portrait of the emperor in armour and the frame ornament are both subordinated to the main idea, glorification of the emperor's military victories, of which Poltava was considered the most important. The same motifs occur on the frame of the miniature portrait of Catherine the Great by A. I. Cherny (1765; Hermitage). Relief depictions of an eagle bearing a laurel twig in its beak, two cupids, cannon, standards, trumpets, palm leaves and bunches of grapes establish the empress as a wise and victorious ruler.

The trophies depicted on the frame of a portrait of a Russian monarch were calculated to convince the viewer that he was the leading figure in military campaigns; victory was associated with him and with him only, and consequently, other portraits displayed alongside his enjoyed no such rich symbolism. This is especially evident in the gallery of 1812 in the Winter Palace, St Petersburg, designed by Carlo Rossi (1826). The portrait of Alexander I hung on the cross wall of the narrow gallery has a frame richly decorated with trophy symbols and a curtain of sacred tradition to enhance its importance. The portraits of the Russian generals of the war of 1812 are of considerably smaller size and hung on the side walls. In the architect's plan they serve as a framing



161 Jan Theniusz., *Battle of the Zuider Zee*, in a frame by Johannes Kinnema, 1668.



for the portrait of the emperor. Their narrow, lath-style frames, devoid of triumphal symbolism, are reminiscent of the style of the Picture Hall of the Great Palace of Peterhof, where the placing of the pictures serves the purpose of decorating the walls in the eighteenth-century tradition of subordinating paintings to architecture.

If the picture frame with ornamental regalia draws close to the throne of a monarch, the frame with trophy ornamentation is reminiscent of the triumphal arch and the contents of military rooms in palaces and museums. This is not accidental, for trophies actively extend the scope of the imagination. The psychology of the interpretation of ornament, according to Ernst Gombrich, involves constant play between expectation and surprise. To this process the category of desirability might be added. Trophies arouse feelings of joy and optimism, of possession and superiority. Consequently, they frequently leave the context of depicted images and reach the frame, and vice versa. A striking example is a carved trophy frame made in 1668 by the master Johannes Kinnema for the painting *Battle of the Zuider Zee* by Jan Theunisz. (illus. 161). In Russian eighteenth-century art this kind of frame is more characteristic of engravings than of paintings, and generally used for maps and military campaign plans, an example being a cartouche displaying a plan for the taking of the town of Korela on 7 June 1710, by an unknown engraver of the school of Pieter Picart (illus. 162).[25]

Trophy ornament began to appear on palatial picture frames during the Petrine era, which saw the first triumphal arches in Russia. At the end of September 1696, on the return of the Russian forces led by Peter after the taking of Azov, the first triumphal gates were built in Moscow. They were constructed on the emperor's initiative by Russian craftsmen directed by the painter Ivan Saltanov (see chapter Two).[26] The project of ceremonial entry into the capital through a newly built triumphal gateway came to Russia from classical tradition via Western Europe, where the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a revival of the ancient Roman custom of laying captured weaponry at the feet of a victorious general and the corresponding ceremonial of triumphal arches, commemorative pictures and sculpture, heroic verse and speeches.[27]

Triumphal gateways continued to be built into the early eighteenth century along the procession route of the returning Russian troops. These were free-standing wooden structures decorated with allegorical painting and carved wooden sculpture, and at the same time commemorative pictures and engravings were produced – portraits of the

162 Studio of Pieter Picart, Cartouche for a plan for the capture of Korela Fortress, 1711.

emperor, battle scenes, and depictions of the gates themselves with troops marching through them. The celebrations of the victory of Poltava involved the building of seven gateways, five of which are shown on surviving broadsheets engraved by Aleksey Zubov and Picart. It is documented that during the celebrations in 1709 all Moscow was decorated with triumphal pictures in azure-painted frames with juniper decoration (replacing laurel boughs). These framed pictures were made available at the city gates and distributed 'to the homes of the ministers'. About a thousand 'large' and 'small' pictures (or 'sheets') in all were produced by artists and icon painters.[28] The building of the triumphal gates, the descriptions of their allegorical depictions in the state press, and the production of framed engravings thus constituted a unified panegyric in celebration of a famous Russian victory.[29]

The triumphal gates were even portrayed and celebrated at the time on the stage, transformed from the genre of occasional architecture into theatre scenery, just as they had been in their original form. The display of military trophies was a popular practice in the Russian theatre, in accordance with the old tradition of translation of a word into a concrete object or its representation. Later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, palace and museum programming gave triumphal subject matter a materialized treatment that chimed with the age of Romanticism and Positivism. Real military trophies complemented trophy ornamentation on picture frames and brought museum exhibitions to life. Thus in an exhibition in 1854 in the Trophy Room of the Armoury Palace, real military trophies were displayed beneath portraits of tsars. Trophies from the battle of Poltava were shown under the portrait of Peter I, among them some personal belongings of Charles XII, including his sedan; beneath the portrait of Catherine the Great, standards taken from Polish troops under Napoleon's command in 1812, French Republican standards from the Revolution of 1830 and, from the wars with Turkey, keys to the fortresses of Bendery, Akkerman, Kiliya Yenikopol', Perekop and Iasi; beneath the portrait of Alexander I, trophies from the Polish Uprising of 1831 and keys to the Turkish fortress of Braylov, taken in 1809; and finally, beneath the portrait of Nicholas I, Hungarian standards seized during the Russian suppression of the rising of 1849.[30] In such a context, the main purpose of the exhibition frame of a portrait of a monarch was to help convince the viewer of the valour and political power of the portrayed. History to the nineteenth-century mind was above all the consistent collection of facts.

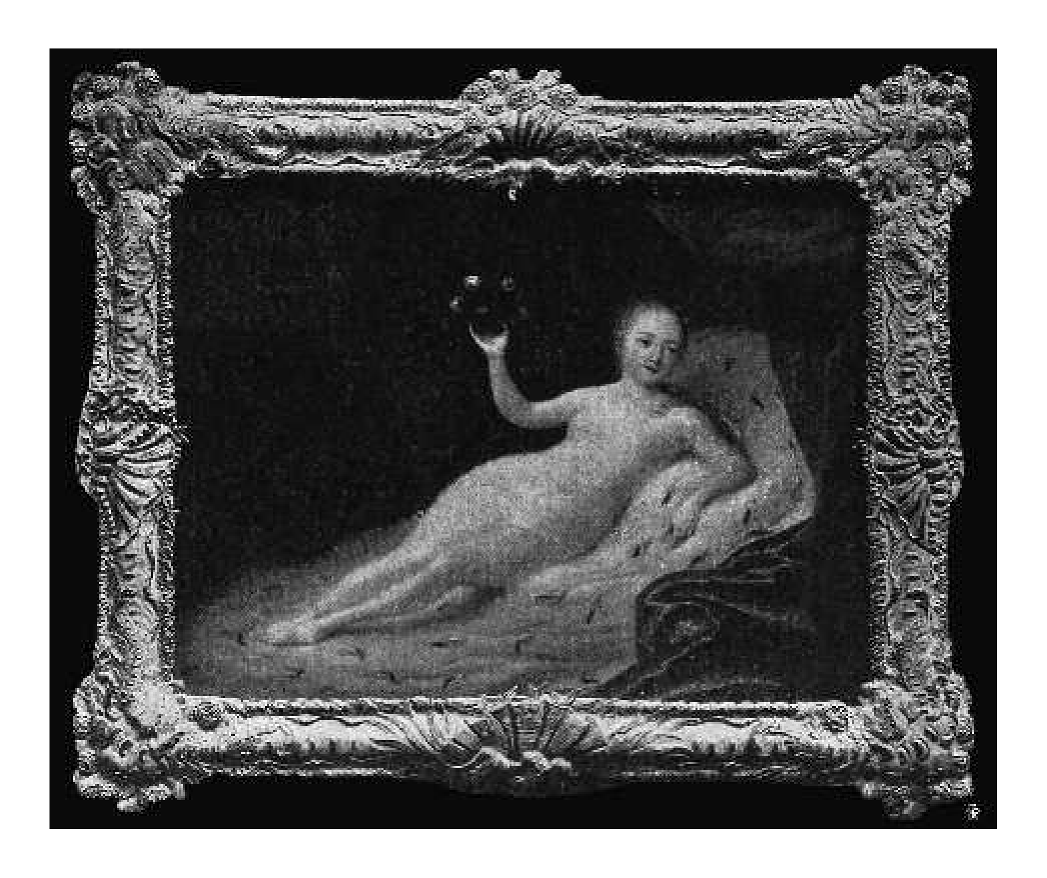
Trophy ornament on a frame played the same role. On the periphery of the field of view, the trophies were linked to the subject of the picture. The eye finding its way into the portrait dwelt on the frame, which helped the roaming gaze focus on the picture. Thus the frame ornament actively influenced perception, evoking supplementary feelings and reactions. A good example of the hidden symbolism of trophy ornament may be seen on the frame made by the firm of Fabergé for nine miniature portraits of members of the imperial family from Alexander I to Alexander III and Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, wife of Nicholas II (illus. 163). The frame takes the form of a triangular stand, at the top of which is a two-headed eagle with the imperial crown on a laurel wreath, containing the miniatures and a decorative framing pattern of laurel garlands and crossed arrows. The triangular form of the frame-stand may allude to



the symbol, widespread in sacred art, of the Eye of God, protecting the Russian imperial house in all its triumphs and victories. Together with the title of the depicted figures in visual form, the trophy ornament serves, as ever, the purpose of their glorification. One final example of this type of frame must be mentioned: the remarkable frame of the portrait of Crown Princess Elizabeth by Louis Caravaque (1684–1754) from the Alexander Palace, Tsarskoye Selo (illus. 164). The frame contains no official symbolism, for the subject of the painting is allegorically represented as the figure of Flora. But with its floral, plant and shell ornamentation, it is included within the content of the image and serves the overall idea of the painting.

If we remember that palatial portrait frames of all kinds played with overstatement, we shall understand how important it was for court architects and artists to link their symbolism with surrounding interiors. Clocks, furniture, table decorations, china and dress – all these could carry symbols indicating a relationship to the life and style of the monarch. Together with palace ritual, they made up a single symbolic field, each in its own way speaking essentially of one and the same thing. In his book of emblems Nestor Maksimovich-Ambodik devotes special attention to the connections between title and ritual, the coordination

163 Frame containing nine portrait miniatures of members of the imperial family by Fabergé (craftsman Viktor Aarne), 1896–1908. Cleveland Museum of Art.



between colours of the coat of arms and of the dress of a monarch or a magnate. It was prescribed that a 'livery caftan' should be worn of the same colour as the background of a depicted coat of arms, whereas a *kamzol*, a man's sleeveless jacket, and other articles of dress had to be of the same colour, not of the background, but of the coat of arms itself.[31] These prescriptions throw some light on the use of the colours of order symbols in the decor of the halls of the Great Kremlin Palace, and indicate that a great many further aspects of the palace had a precise symbolic meaning.

Among these, clocks had a special place, and the rhetoric of their surrounds was no less important than the rhetoric of portrait frames. Clocks meant time – but time allotted to a person of power was time from which history and myth were inseparable. Like picture frames and espalier-work, palace clocks and watches never existed independently. Table clocks, mantelpiece clocks, grandfather clocks, carriage clocks, pocket watches, watches worn on the breast – all these were component parts of the splendour of dress or interiors. And from earliest times, the form of a clock or watch and its casing carried symbolic weight. Examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries include small watches in the form of stars, crosses, little books and boxes, and even skulls – rich symbolic forms of post-Renaissance culture, some of which also occurred on frames of icons, paintings and engravings in the Mannerist and Baroque periods. In Russia all these kinds of watch were

164 L. Caravaque, *Crown Princess Elizabeth*, first half of the 18th century. Alexander Palace, Tsarskoye Selo.

called *zepnyye*, from the Old Russian word *zep'* (pocket). They were made of semi-precious stones and precious metals and supplied with a chain, to be worn on the neck or breast. When table clocks entered the inventories of interiors in the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth, their cases began to take a variety of forms. The Baroque period saw clock-cases in the shape of a vase, a tower or a reliquary with typical floral or other sculptural ornament such as a pig-tailed Kronos as a symbol of swiftly passing time. At the end of the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth, a period that saw rapid building of palaces, clocks began to appear as part of a set also comprising chest of drawers, console table and dressing table. As in the case of pictures, architects and ornamental sculptors designed their surrounds and cases. Huge monumental clocks in the manner of Louis XIV's celebrated *ébéniste* André Boulle appeared in Russian palace interiors under the new names of their owners. This was a time when a monarch's reign or a leading figure's period of power was growing shorter, and so the value of not only every hour but also every minute and second increased. The span of such a person's life was reckoned as part of a country's history, and clock-cases gave unambiguous indication of this. As a result of the eighteenth century's heightened consciousness of the passing of time, a clock mechanism was introduced that chimed the hour, half-hour, quarter-hour and minutes, with a different chime and tone for each interval. Clocks were supplied with state and family coats of arms, portraits of monarchs and magnates, ornamental trophies, wreaths and garlands, all of which became fixed elements in the framing of 'palace time'.

Among chiming clocks were some with lyre-shaped surrounds and with a silhouette of Catherine II bordered with laurel branches (illus. 165). A more complex marking of time under Catherine the Great is displayed in a unique creation by Moscow clock-makers executing a design by the Welshman M. Maddocks (second half of the eighteenth century; Armoury Palace, Kremlin, Moscow). A massive clock with the name 'Temple of Glory' is equipped with a complex mechanism that at intervals used to set sculptured bronze and cut-glass figures in move-



165 Clock with profile portrait of Catherine II, *c.* 1775–1800. Museums of the Moscow Kremlin.

ment. A small white clock face with Arabic figures is the centre of a huge framing allegorical composition likening the reign of Catherine the Great to the sun shining on a global scale. The clock face is set in a radiant disc supported by the figure of Mercury, and above it a pair of angels blow trumpets. Two columns flank the sun, symbolizing the strength and power of empire. On the base of one of these is a depiction of Falconet's celebrated equestrian statue of Peter the Great, commissioned by Catherine, with the Muses on the other. Upon further columns above, an emblematic eagle feeds its young, with sculptured figures of Apollo and Venus to left and right. All this structure surrounding the clock rests on the large base bearing the clock mechanism, which is supported in turn by symbolic sculptural representations of the points of the compass: Europe, Asia, Africa and America. On the doors of the pedestal-case are symmetrical bas-reliefs of Neptune flanked by scenes from classical mythology. Every three hours the doors of the pedestal automatically opened to reveal a waterfall in the background and figures moving against it, and every five seconds, from the beak of an eagle sitting on her nest, a pearl dropped into the beak of an eaglet. All the details of this composition extolled the name of Catherine the Great and were applicable to her reign, in which every second was an important historical unit.

Especially interesting for their surrounds are gift clocks associated with jubilee celebrations, with symbolism to suit the wishes of the celebrants. Among these is a monumental silver clock 'for the XXVth anniversary of the marriage of Alexander III and Mariya Fyodorovna' (daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark), commissioned from the firm of Fabergé about 1891 by 32 members of the imperial family (illus. 166). This project for the glorification of the Romanovs is inseparably linked with the idea of union between the Russian and Danish ruling dynasties. The Romanov griffon therefore appears on the base of the clock-case, holding a short sword and two shields bearing the arms of the two ruling houses, while the clock face (the 'time' of the imperial couple together) is framed by flying angels playing musical instruments. Above the clock, a typical late nineteenth-century palace interior piece, are the two-headed eagle and crown. Alongside paintings and their frames, clocks such as this repeatedly emphasized



166 Clock commemorating the 'XXVth Anniversary of the marriage of Alexander III and Mariya Fyodorovna', by Fabergé (craftsman Mikhail Perkhin), *c.* 1896. Private collection.

the preciousness of the time allotted to all-powerful monarchs.

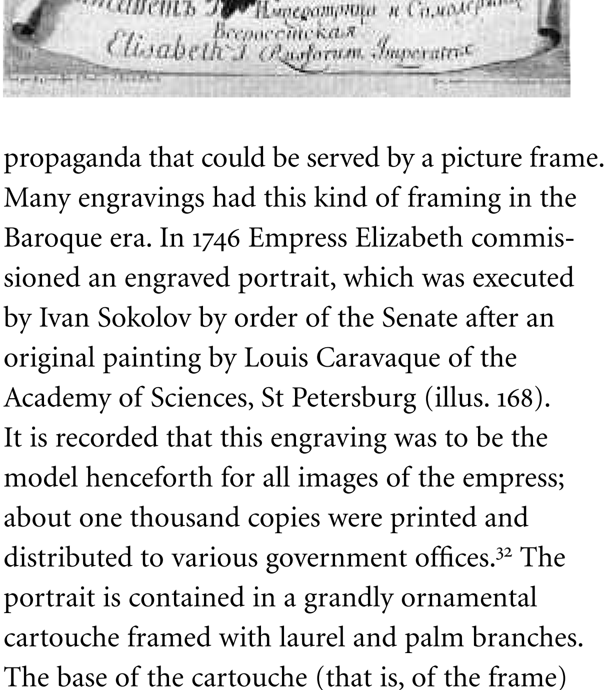
Everything we have just considered belonged to palace interiors. Paintings in elaborate frames were seen by only a limited number of individuals. Powerful images of tsarist grandeur, however, were not only required by palace rhetoric and ritual; they also served the ideological purposes of mass propaganda. From the time of the Roman Empire this role has been played by medals and coinage. A ruler's profile is always solemn and majestic. And in addition, the further it is from reality, the more readily will it be memorized and remain in the memories of whole generations. With the coming of the printing press to Russia in the sixteenth century, original images for coins and medals were engraved, and later reproduced by lithographic and photographic processes, that is, those most suited to mass reproduction. It was these processes that clearly established the image of a ruler in the mass consciousness, turning it into a visual stereotype. Such images were usually far, and sometimes very far, from reality, but all the same never wholly false. A printing stereoype reproduces a simplified image of an original that may lose, in whole or in part, the actual features of that original. Therefore in an engraved portrait of a monarch we find, besides differences, only remote resemblances: sometimes the 'likeness' is changed beyond recognition, and sometimes, as in a clouded mirror, we see fleeting reflections of reality. The frame of such depictions is always a guide to perception; it helps the image to tell its story, it imprints the image on the viewer's consciousness. In Ivan Argunov's painting *The Kalmyk Girl*, the girl holds up an engraved portrait of Countess Varvara Sheremeteva, and convinces the viewer that it is a genuine likeness of the subject (illus. 167). Here we have a typical rhetorical device in which a painted portrait of a girl acquires the function of framing an engraving. Shown in a secondary artistic dimension, the depiction of Varvara Sheremeteva immediately acquired a supplementary meaning – the establishment in the viewer's mind of what appeared to be the countess's favourite image of herself.

This development of a depiction into a visual stereotype shows the special purpose of mass



167 Ivan Argunov, *The Kalmyk Girl*, 1767. Kuskovo Museum, Moscow.







propaganda that could be served by a picture frame. Many engravings had this kind of framing in the Baroque era. In 1746 Empress Elizabeth commissioned an engraved portrait, which was executed by Ivan Sokolov by order of the Senate after an original painting by Louis Caravaque of the Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg (illus. 168). It is recorded that this engraving was to be the model henceforth for all images of the empress; about one thousand copies were printed and distributed to various government offices.[32] The portrait is contained in a grandly ornamental cartouche framed with laurel and palm branches. The base of the cartouche (that is, of the frame) is made up of the Russian imperial coat of arms with, separately below it, a scroll bearing the full name of the empress. The rhetoric of this framing makes the image, title and name of the empress an indissoluble symbolic unity.

The frame of an engraved portrait of the young Peter I carries more complex meanings. In the 1700s this image was the source of numerous copies, so that it may be regarded as the most reliable benchmark for portraits of him.[33] It was the work of Pieter van Gunst (1659–1724) after an original by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), principal court painter of the reign of William III and Mary (illus. 169). Kneller's portrait was painted in 1697 for the English king during Peter's early sojourn in Western Europe. Van Gunst's engraving catered for

168 *Empress Elizabeth*, 1746, engraving after an original by Louis Caravaque.

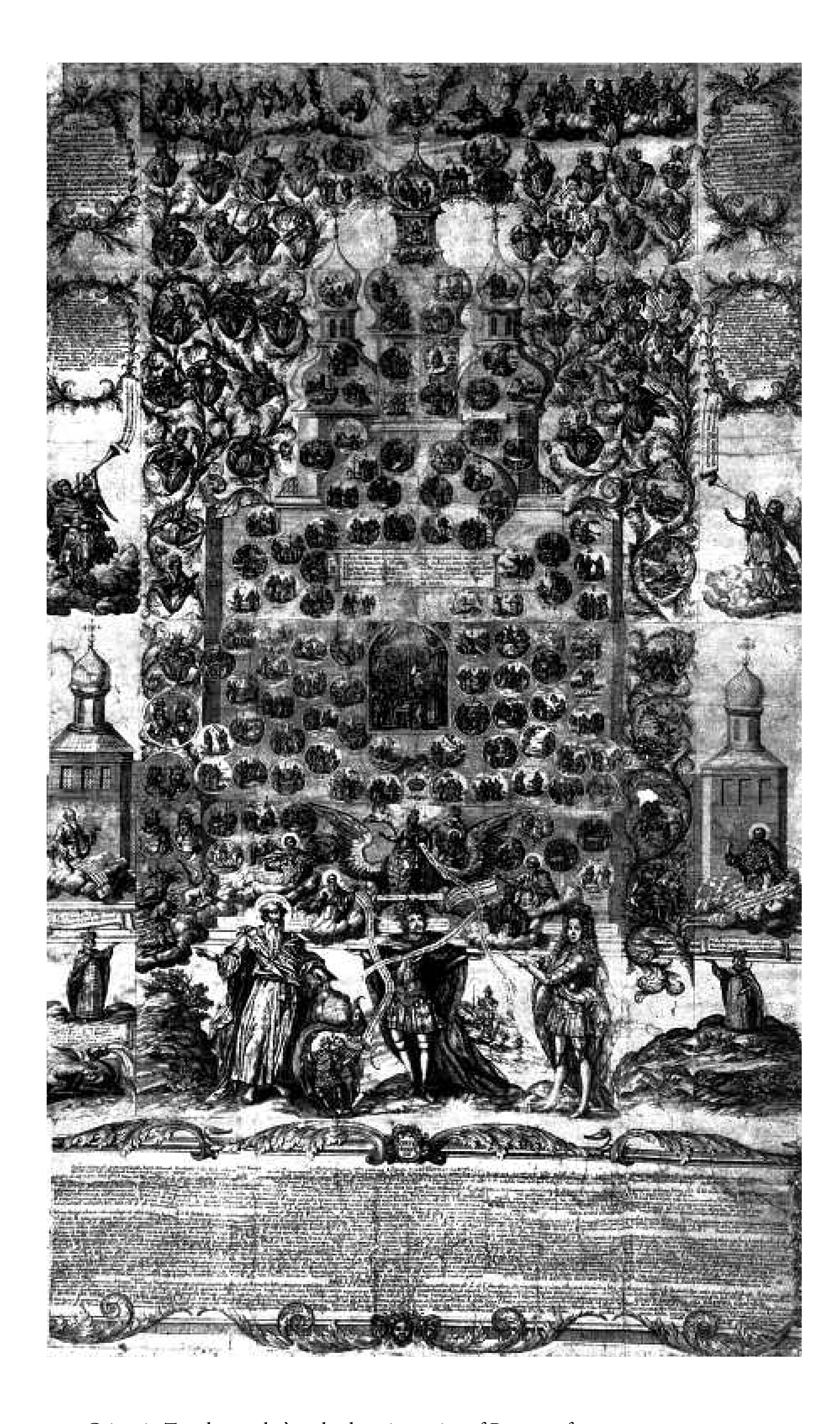
169 Pieter van Gunst, *Peter I*, *c.* 1698, engraving, after an original by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

the Western public's interest in the Russian tsar and helped to establish Peter's image in the popular mind. He gave his framing a whole range of meanings that were readily appreciated by the public of the time. First, the tsar is named, and second, interpreted on the framing. The inscription in a cartouche, 'PETRUS ALEXEWITZ Zaar et Magnus Dux Moscovie', is confirmed by the crown above the subject's head with the royal symbols of orb and sceptre and triumphal elements of sword and trumpets. A heavy curtain, assuming the function of an inner frame, emphasizes the magnitude of the figure portrayed. The extremely wide distribution achieved by this kind of engraving can be judged from the announcements of the availability of 'recently printed portraits of the Imperial Family' in the bookshop of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg, which appeared in the columns of the *St Petersburg Gazette* throughout the eighteenth century.[34]

Nowhere, perhaps, however, was the rhetoric of the picture frame so overt as in the genre of the colophon at the end of the seventeenth century and during the first half of the eighteenth. We have already encountered a reinterpretation of the colophon in the icon. Now in the field of printed graphics the genre becomes an allegoric composition, frame or framing, glorifying the monarch and a graphic commentary on a panegyric text. The constant components of a colophon are a text (a literary analogue of the image), but also a portrait, view, cartouche and coat of arms. All these are present in the celebrated colophon by Grigoriy Tepchegorsky depicting Afanasiy Zarutsky, archpriest of Novgorod-Seversk, extolling Peter I in 1717 (illus. 170). The upper part of the composition contains a number of medallions and cartouches displaying devotional texts in Latin, scenes from the Holy Scriptures, and depictions of the Church fathers, prophets and tsars. At the bottom of the illustrated area of the huge sheet (187 x 109 cm), Peter the Great flanked by St John the Evangelist and Peter's son Aleksey are shown holding up the church with its five cupolas. Within a separate frame at the bottom of the whole is an extensive text dedicated to Peter and his family, with explanations of the images above.[35] The rhetoric of the Baroque frame here displays a striking interest in aesthetic language as an independent cultural value, aiming to accommodate different kinds of convention within the confines of a single composition. In the Baroque period an image often served as a framing for a text and was inseparable from its meanings.

The rhetoric of title on frames of portraits of a Russian monarch was always associated with the ritual of coronation. Hence a continuous sequence of engravings, miniatures, medals, portraits, sculptural monuments, tombs and photographs displayed a monarch's image in the context of ceaseless ceremonial speeches, eulogies, ritual gestures, ceremonial entries and exits that were called upon to place the autocrat's person at the very centre of an imagined transition or point of contact between heaven and earth. The ritual purpose of framing was to emphasize that the monarch was supreme above all things, and all the forms that it took – plastic, literary, theatrical and religious – were outwardly linked together, their common theme being the supremacy, half-earthly, half-divine, of the monarch.

The coronation of the tsar was the most important part of the state ceremonial, in which its highly complex material and conceptual framing system was reflected as in a mirror. This was because the



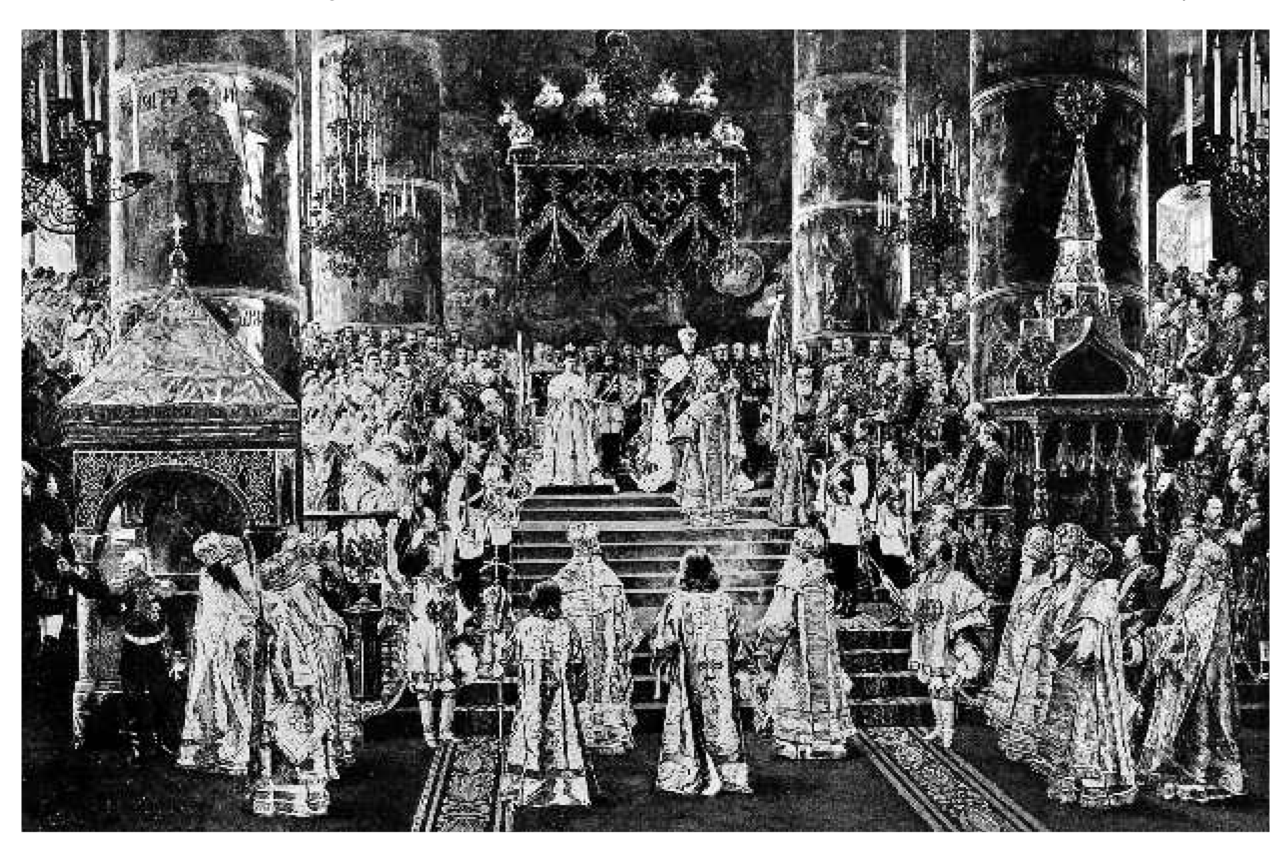
170 Grigoriy Tepchegorsky's colophon in praise of Peter I, after 1717.
State Hermitage, St Petersburg.

coronation ceremony created an ideal image of the world and, embodying the 'theatre of power', played its part in the construction of a well-defined world order. Being a religious ceremony, the coronation represented the Christian cosmos, imbued with the mythology of the state. But how was this cosmos created? By what means? How did it relate to the world of the popular imagination and the store of traditional values? The fact was that in the course of centuries, those who organized coronations had chosen and refined specific means of inculcating the mythology of power into the Russian mind, embracing architecture, words, material objects, gesture, dress and every last detail of presentation, as, for example, ceremonial movement and the selection of personnel taking part in coronation processions. And from one century to the next, from one coronation to the next, they created a wholly concrete model in space and time, which, in unique contrast to the conditional world of the icon or the painting, mobilized real objects and living people playing roles strictly allotted to them. The person of the monarch and his or her subjects, the imperial regalia, the throne, the church and palace buildings – everything embodied a Christian picture of the world. The coronation was the most important of the ceremonies for which the palace furnishings were intended, and more than that, it even had a transformative effect on church furnishings, creating supplementary symbolic functions, above all in regard to the place of the monarch's enthronement. The rite of the coronation joined palace and church together with an invisible but extremely intimate thread, providing the cultural-historical context for a huge variety of palatial framings, including the frame of Repin's painting *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts* and the architectural-decorative designs of the ceremonial halls of the Great Kremlin Palace, which had been especially conceived, as we have seen, for coronation ceremonies.

The coronation ceremony of Emperor Alexander III is documented in numerous images and texts: official paintings, photographs, popular lithographic prints and drawings, official edicts, ceremonial speeches and eulogies. Taken as a whole, these explain much, for it was they that formed the image of the ideal monarch called upon to rule the country on the basis of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. A special contribution to this process was made by the notion of Holy Rus'. Early national history, Old Russian icons and texts, all kinds of parallels in literary works and stage productions occasioned by the coronation celebrations, even the consecration of the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow – all this was calculated to drive home the idea of the mystical union between tsar and people and the providential role of the Russian Empire. Thus on 1 (13) May 1883, on the eve of the coronation of Alexander III, the newspaper *Novoye vremya* published a supplement containing an illustrated history of Russian coronations.[36] This showed a picture of the crowning of the first of the Romanovs, Mikhail Fyodorovich, in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, and portraits of tsars Mikhail, Peter I and Alexander II, those monarchs who, in the eyes of the planners of the present coronation, were most to be associated with landmarks in the history of the coronation of Russian tsars. The supplement also contained pictures of thrones: the 'Tsar's Place' of Ivan the Terrible, the thrones of Mikhail and Aleksey and the special throne of the tsar and co-tsar Peter I

and his sickly elder half-brother Ivan Alekseyevich, whose joint rule officially lasted from 1682 to 1696. Also illustrated were historic and new regalia: the cap of Monomakh, imperial crowns, orb and sceptre, the national flag and the national sword – the originals of the ornamental images seen on so many frames of portraits of tsars. And here was the anointment vessel, a portrait sketch of the herald appointed to announce the coming coronation, and a depiction of the previous coronation procession, led by Emperor Alexander II. Together with this pictorial history was an article on the coronation of Tsar Mikhail and a description of the 'sanctified and holy ceremonial' of the forthcoming coronation of Alexander III.[37] It all set this coronation in historical context, enabling the reader to perceive the analogies that applied to the new emperor; and the variety of historical regalia and thrones shown in the supplement made it abundantly clear that no novelty in ceremonial would in any way change the essential meaning of the momentous event. On the contrary, the repetition of traditional procedures and memories of past coronations were calculated to demonstrate the durability of the idea that the monarch was God's living deputy on earth, a living icon, a source of protection and redemption.

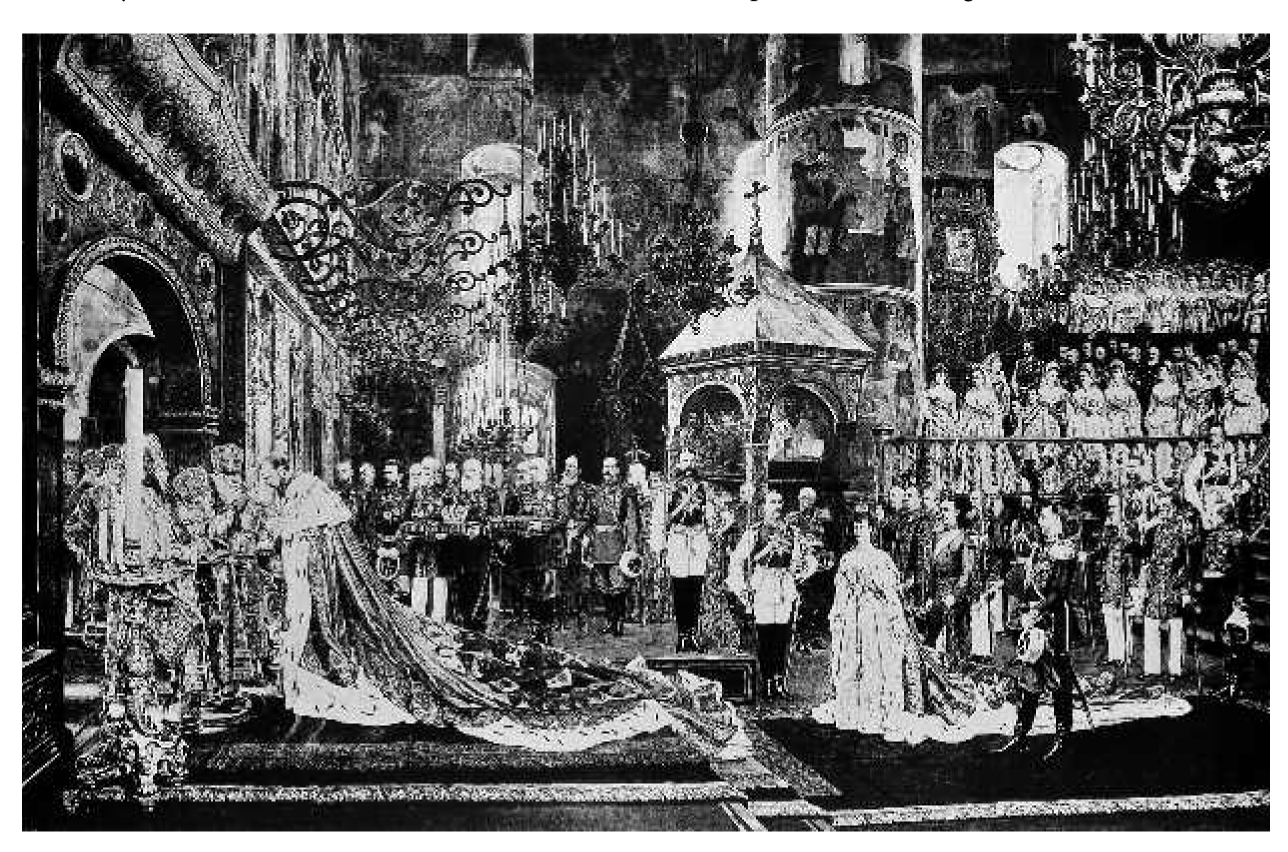
This was how Alexander III was presented in two official paintings by the French artist Georges Becker, which like Repin's monumental canvas were commissioned by the emperor to commemorate his coronation: *The Sacred Coronation of their*



171 Georges Becker, *The Sacred Coronation of their Imperial Majesties Emperor Alexander III and Empress Mariya Fyodorovna, 15 May 1883*, phototype.

Imperial Majesties Emperor Alexander III and Empress Mariya Fyodorovna, *15 May 1883* and *The Holy Anointing of Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Alexander III and Empress Mariya Fyodorovna, 15 May 1883* (illus. 171, 172).[38] Outline drawings were printed and distributed with numbers and names identifying the figures portrayed, a rhetorical device showing that in the age of realism, the painter sought close likenesses of the persons portrayed. It was not by chance that, as the artist Aleksey Bogolyubov (1824–1896), who was close to the emperor, later recalled: 'The events of the coronation in Moscow set many artists to work . . . The French artist Becker immortalized this event in two paintings full of portraits that are very close to life and will be extremely valuable for the interest of their content.'[39]

Anyone looking at these pictures and drawings became involved in a theatrical production containing a number of interacting symbolic systems all designed to draw attention to a structure of the Christian cosmos in which the placing of the tsar within the spatial composition of the paintings was clearly close to heaven. Therefore dress, gesture, ceremonial words, singing, incense, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wall and icon paintings, and finally, the liturgy in the Cathedral of the Dormition, at which the living presence of Christ himself was felt – all this brought the figure of the emperor close to the icon of *Christ Pantocrator*. It seemed as if an icon were being dramatized before the viewer's eyes. The impact of iconic images and the coronation



172 Georges Becker, *The Holy Anointing of their Imperial Majesties Emperor Alexander III and Empress Mariya Fyodorovna, 15 May 1883*, phototype.

ritual did not demand aesthetic feelings from the viewer of the pictorial record. In accordance with its religious character, the ceremony took on the most exalted possible meaning: the living person of the emperor underwent transfiguration, and he became an *image*, that is, endowed with a symbolic aura that raised him to the level of the superhuman.

It was consistent with this image that after the anointment, making the monarch 'anointed by God', ritual prescribed that Alexander III should stand beside the icon of *Christ Pantocrator*, in the first row of icons on the iconostasis in the Cathedral of the Dormition. In the lofty terms of the anointment rite:

> The Metropolitan of Novgorod, taking the precious vessel containing the Holy Ointment, shall approach His Imperial Majesty and, moistening the precious *sachets* [anointing cloth] already prepared, shall perform the Holy Anointment of the brow of His Majesty, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, the ears, the breast and the hands, saying the words: 'Seal of the Holy Spirit', and the Metropolitan of Kiev shall wipe the places to be anointed. Having received the Anointment, after the completion of which a carillon shall be sounded and 101 cannon-shots fired, His Majesty the Emperor shall stand on the right-hand side facing the Icon of the Saviour.[40]

Becker's portrayal of the whole coronation ritual follows the tradition of dividing it into two parts, the coronation and the anointment. The first painting shows the emperor and empress crowned and in ceremonial dress standing on daises in front of the thrones and listening to the solemn address by the Metropolitan of Moscow. All the other figures – clergy, military personnel and government officials, representatives of the nobility and people – surround the thrones in deep reverence. They are witnessing an exterior transfiguration of a man associated with change of dress. In purple and crown a man is seen transfigured to an emperor – or more precisely, the *image* of an emperor. However, he will become an emperor only after the ritual of anointment and administration of the sacraments.

This moment is depicted in Becker's second painting, with Alexander III in front of the opened 'tsar's doors' of the iconostasis of the cathedral of the Dormition being anointed by the Metropolitan of Novgorod. After this the emperor will go to the altar, where the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the throne has already taken place, with bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. As soon as the monarch has received the Holy Sacraments he undergoes his inner transfiguration; as is the case with icons, in religious ritual no formal element is separable from its meaning, no symbol from its content. Moreover, as has recently been shown, the anointment in Russia at coronations was identified with the sacrament of anointment that takes place in the Orthodox Church after baptism.[41] The powerful and profound effect that such a ritual, in this respect reminiscent of baptism, would have had can only be imagined. Amid the glitter of gold and the colours of ancient icons and clouds of incense, against the voices of the clergy, was a human being in the visible process of transfiguration. And this human being, in the minds of all those present, became merged with the icons themselves, whose very function was to bring the corporeal and the metaphysical together. It is not accidental that Becker paints the saints of

the frescoes and the participants in the ceremony in identical poses: both are absorbed by the mystical significance of the moment that is making an emperor into a living likeness of God on earth.

From the time of Tsar Fyodor (*reg* 1584–98) the coronation of tsars involved the rites of anointment and Communion, that is, the special characteristics that were fundamental to the coronations of the Byzantine emperors, conferring on them, as the official *Book of Coronations* (1899) put it, 'in large part the power and significance of God's elect, called upon to develop the principles of Orthodox autocracy in their state'.[42] Communion and anointment always formed the sacred core of the ritual of the tsar's coronation. In the execution of these liturgical elements, every effort was made to follow tradition as closely as possible. In the coronation ritual the monarch's external transfiguration, in matters of dress and regalia, was regarded as 'external' in relation to his 'internal' transfiguration, and, like all kinds of framing, it readily reflected historical change. This was the case even with the furnishings and dress that played a part in coronation ritual; for these elements were subject to fashion and the wishes of individuals. And so in the illustrations of the supplement referred to above, historical changes in the outward forms of the monarch's transfiguration are to be seen – old and new styles of regalia, sometimes thrones, but the locale, the cathedral of the Dormition in the Moscow Kremlin, is always the same, as is the anointment vessel centrally placed in the pictures, indicating the religious character of the whole ceremony.

Historical changes in the furnishings for coronations are especially noticeable in the form of the 'throne seat', the medieval 'chamber of the tsar' long having carried the highest symbolic weight. In 1551 Ivan the Terrible built 'the Tsar's Place' in the cathedral of the Dormition, at a time when he was seeking to consolidate the new title of tsar for himself. The 'Tsar's Place' was ornamented with bas-reliefs depicting 'The Tale of the Princes of Vladimir' and, above all, scenes from Vladimir Monomakh's campaign against the Byzantine Empire, during which he is said to have received certain regalia for the high office of tsar as a gift from his maternal grandfather, the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomachos. The cap of Monomakh (used in the coronations of tsars up to 1728, when it was replaced by a crown) is associated with this heroic early figure of Russian history, along with the other leading elements of the Russian regalia: orb, sceptre and dalmatic. The first Romanov tsars, Mikhail (*reg* 1613–45) and Aleksey (*reg* 1645–76), proceeded to build a throne complex at the centre of the cathedral of the Dormition, set upon a pedestal with twelve steps covered with red cloth. At the coronation of Catherine I as empress in 1724, the design of the throne complex in the cathedral (planned by Peter I himself) incorporated the Western elements that it preserved up to the reign of Alexander III, to be seen in Becker's *Sacred Coronation*: above the throne was a canopy carrying a visual equivalent of the monarch's title, the two-headed eagle and the coats of arms of the six principalities of Early Rus': Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia. The tsar's subjects stood in order of rank on the two broad top steps of the pedestal, symbolizing the hierarchy of power.

In a comparison of the seventeenth-century icon *Christ Pantocrator* with the *parsuna* of Tsar Aleksey, it has already been noted that the figures of Christ and the tsar are robed in the style of the

early Byzantine emperors, symbolizing the tsar's involvement with the Church hierarchy. In the eyes of his time, Alexander III, however, was seeking to revive not only the image of a Byzantine emperor but also that of Tsar Aleksey. This was evident in the planning both of the coronation ceremony in the great cathedral of the Dormition and of various events marking the occasion, among them the consecration of the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. It was also evident in the restoration of the iconostasis of the cathedral of the Dormition, the construction of a new icon case, modelled on the seventeenth-century one, for the icon of the Vladimir *Mother of God*, and the decoration of the walls of the cathedral with early icons, creating the atmosphere of a Russian church of the time of Tsar Aleksey. The walls of the Palace of Facets were painted 'in the manner of the early masters', and interior decoration schemes, the latest books and celebratory texts catered for the 'Russian style' of the time. In the words of the *Book of Coronations*:

> For Coronation day, by God's will, restorations were carried out in the Cathedral of the Dormition and the Palace of Facets in ways that revealed the historical spirit of the new sovereign, who endeavoured to resurrect historical traditions. The iconostasis and the parts of the coronation church that were of metal were restored to their state of appearance in the seventeenth century, in the reign of Aleksey. Some early icons were found and placed in appropriate positions in the iconostasis; the icon case of the Vladimir *Mother of God* was restored to its original form, and measures were taken for the preservation of newly uncovered early wall paintings.[43]

No less important in Alexander III's plans was the interpretation of the beginning and ending of the coronation ceremonies and celebrations, that is, the spatial-temporal framing of the whole panegyric event. A central place was allotted to the religious parts of the ceremonial. The chosen date fitted the festival calendar of the Church. Before the beginning of regular church services the names of the emperor and his family would be mentioned, and portraits of the emperor with icons and crosses carried at the head of church processions. At the end of the coronation ceremonies the huge newly completed cathedral of Christ the Saviour was consecrated, which was interestingly reflected in the commemorative illustrated booklets. For example, the *Album of the Coronation of Their Imperial Majesties on 15 May 1883*, with lithographs by I. I. Klang and published in Moscow, had a solemn verse opening with an illustration of the ceremonial arrival of the future emperor in Moscow, and concluded with an illustration of the consecration of the cathedral of Christ the Saviour on 29 May.[44] Thus the 'arrival in Moscow' and 'consecration of the Cathedral' formed the symbolic frame for the events illustrated between them: 'The Sovereign at prayer before the Icon of the Iberian Mother of God', 'Heralds announce the day of the Coronation to the people on Red Square', 'The Coronation of His Majesty the Emperor', 'His Majesty the Emperor crowns the Empress', 'The Tsar and his people'. Besides these illustrated booklets, numerous newspaper articles and individually published texts appeared in which Russia was referred to as 'Holy Rus' protected by God' and 'the new Jerusalem' and the Russian people described in slavophile style as 'a young and vigorous nation in an ageing world', 'brimful of devotion to the Holy

Orthodox Church', while the emperor was declared to be 'the highest leader of the nation', 'the living image of God on earth', 'enlivened . . . by the sun'. Gospel texts were quoted in these publications:

> Let us all say: O Lord, gratify His name beyond the immortal name of His father and all His glorious predecessors! Raise up His throne above their thrones! Let us say with the highest reverence: 'Blessed be the Lord God of the new Israel, now glorified in the land of His deputy, the most diligent Protector of His Holy Church!'[45]

Novoye Vremya emphasized that further to the coronation of the new tsar, 'an additional national ceremony had taken place – the consecration of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour'.[46] On 29 May 1883 the paper printed 'the Address to His Imperial Majesty delivered by His Holiness the Most Venerable Metropolitan of Moscow on the occasion of the consecration of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on 29 May', which dwelt on the special connection between this event and the coronation of Alexander III. The metropolitan told His Imperial Majesty that the cathedral was 'a memorial to God's great blessings to the Russian nation now entrusted to you at a moment of severe trials and at the same time a memorial to your devout crowned predecessors' profound feelings of gratitude to God our Saviour'.[47] The cathedral had just been finished, 55 years after the acceptance of its first design (in Neoclassical style), a change of national ideology having brought about its completion in the so-called Russian style, which it was influential in establishing in Russia. In accordance with its symbolic role as the new principal church of the Russian Empire, the leaders of the volosts, whom we saw in Repin's painting in the Antechamber of the Great Kremlin Palace, took a direct and significant part in the ceremony of its consecration, thus in depiction and in ritual itself helping to embody the unity of nation and state founded on the theory of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality.

Alexander III's 'Russian idea' lived on after his death in 1894, as is shown not only by the symbolic system of the frame of Repin's painting but also by the bases and pedestals of statues of the emperor, with their interpretative rhetoric. This is especially



173 Etienne-Maurice Falconet, *Peter I* ('*The Bronze Horseman*'), 1768–78, St Petersburg.

evident in a comparison of two statues of Alexander III: Pavel Trubetskoy's on the square of the Moscow Station in St Petersburg (1909) and Alexander Opekushin's unveiled on the square in front of the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in 1912. In the opinion of most contemporaries, Trubetskoy gave a symbolic portrayal of imperial Russia on the verge of catastrophe, with the emperor riding a horse that appeared to be stopping on the edge of a precipice (illus. 174). The pedestal had two levels of significance, on the one hand reminding the viewer of the rock-form pedestal of Falconet's celebrated statue of Peter the Great on Senate (now Decembrists') Square, St Petersburg, and on the other producing an effect quite the opposite of Falconet's, emphasizing not forward but backward movement (illus. 173)![48] Such a pedestal was an integral part of the sculptor's conception, and in this was reminiscent of Symbolist painters' games with the frame, which was frequently included within the artistic idea of the painting (about which more will be said later).



The pedestal and plinth of Opekushin's statue were of quite a different character, being reminiscent of the frame of Repin's painting in the Antechamber of the Great Kremlin Palace with its visual rhetoric denoting the emperor's title. Wanting to bring out the 'Russian idea' of autocracy, the sculptor placed a complex weight of official symbolism on the pedestal and plinth, and represented the emperor seated robed and crowned on his throne holding sceptre and orb, just as he had been at his coronation and at the time of the consecration of the cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Pedestal and plinth were of red granite and the statue itself of bronze. The pedestal bore the inscription: 'To the most Devout most Autocratic Great Sovereign our Emperor Aleksandr Aleksandrovich of All Russia. 1882–1894'. It stood on a massive plinth ornamented at the corners in bronze with the main heraldic symbols of Russia – two-headed eagles surrounded by the coats of arms of the various lands and provinces of the Russian Empire, which served as the heraldic

174 Pavel Trubetskoy, *Emperor Alexander III*, 1909. St Petersburg.



framing for the figure of the emperor on his throne. As in the case of the frame of Repin's picture, this plinth so ornamented constituted both a visual equivalent of Alexander III's imperial title and a symbolic image of the nation-state unity of the Russian Empire.

An analogy may be seen between this plinth and the frame of Konstantin Makovsky's *Emperor*



175 Konstantin Makovsky, *Emperor Alexander II on his Deathbed*, *c.* 1881, in a frame from the Til' workshop. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

176 Detail of frame.

Alexander II on his Deathbed, painted in the tradition of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century icon portraits of eminent Church figures and monks (illus. 175, 176). On a black funerary frame with the imperial crown at the top (possibly after the artist's drawing) the reforms carried out by the assassinated emperor are enumerated – 'public trial', 'emancipation of the serfs', 'freedom of the press', 'zemstvo', 'universal military service', lending the depiction of the dead monarch concrete historical meaning in the usual manner of memorial sculpture. This frame interprets the reign of Alexander II (1855–81) and in the final analysis raises an image of death to the level of symbolic historical commemoration.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, it remains to say that the idea of the value of an individual life enters Makovsky's frame and the design of the pedestal and plinth of Opekushin's statue via the long evolution of the Christian tombstone. Inasmuch as medieval man lived in a purely mythological perspective, the tombs of Russian princes bore a sacred symbolism honouring them as saints. The wall 'portraits' of Russian sovereigns in the Cathedral of the Archangel in the Moscow Kremlin, shrines with relics and gravestone icon portraits all had more to say about heavenly than about earthly life. Nevertheless, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries people began to live in a historical perspective, in which they bore responsibility for their every action. Hence the tombs of rulers acquired a symbolism expressing the significance of their earthly services before God, which basically derived from ancient Roman practice in which the gravestone portrait was associated with the cult of emperors and heroes. Making its appearance on the Christian gravestone, this symbolism firmly linked the depiction of a ruler with ideas of the value of his individual life. The boundary between the sacred and the earthly once again shifted further towards the earthly. In other words, the framing of a portrait of a Russian monarch evolved from the modest icon frame-ark to formal glorification and played an increasing role in the theme of the theatricalization of the power of the state, be it in the context of church, city or palace.

CHAPTER 4

Between Industry and Art

Aesthetic culture is a culture of boundaries . . .
Mikhail Bakhtin[1]

Display

Exhibitions of pictures command no less interesting aesthetic space than that occupied by churches or palaces. Characteristics of picture frames, walls, lighting, even the viewer – all these can be included within the concept of an exhibition of paintings considered as the embodiment of a particular system of values and collective feelings. In the Middle Ages it was the patron who chose the frame; in the Baroque and Neoclassical periods it was the architect. And in the nineteenth century the artist himself began to be concerned with the picture frame. The Romantic era produced the idea of the genius who was not subject to general rules and rhetorical schemes, for he would remake them. The Romantic artist had a new way of correlating art and reality, placing his own self in the foreground, for it was that self that needed to convince the viewer of the truth of his personal observation, imagination and feeling. Furthermore, he discovered within himself the gift of prophecy – an indispensable attribute of the artist of the Romantic period. The portrayal of the artist as a prophetic genius first appears in Schiller's philosophical poem 'Die Künstler' ('The Artists', 1789).

In the Neoclassical period the picture frame did not correlate art and reality but drew a sharp line between them, evidenced in the Kantian aesthetic that saw a work of art as a *Ding an sich* and its frame as an external 'embellishment' that 'diminished its real beauty'.[2] This function took on a distinctive interpretation in European art of the late eighteenth century, especially in France, and the period produced a flowering of the art of the picture frame, which was seen as an embellishment not only of the picture but also of the surrounding interior, and at the same time was made to draw attention to itself as a fixed line of demarcation between the world of the imagination and the world of reality. Footlights were introduced in the theatre during the eighteenth century, a form of 'frame' separating the stage from the audience. The leading architects of the Baroque and Neoclassical periods included articles of everyday palace life in the planning of interiors, and furnishings, furniture, means of lighting and picture frames were all part of their responsibility. Throughout the eighteenth century, and in some cases during the first half of the nineteenth, the architect was a universal specialist in 'spatial arts'. One piece of documentary evidence for this is provided by an order for a picture frame and wall mouldings for the study in the Petrovsky Palace, Moscow.[3] Pictures, furthermore, came to



be definitively classified as 'art' in Russia in the eighteenth century, their instructive function being overtaken by their provision of aesthetic enjoyment in palace interiors, picture galleries or cabinets of art collectors, such as Count Ivan Shuvalov (1727–1797), a patron of artists and president of the Academy of Arts. A depiction of his cabinet of paintings has survived in the form of a copy of a lost oil painting by Fedor Rokotov (1750–1808), in which Jean-Louis Develly's portrait of the count and a *trompe l'oeil* portrayal of his Kalmyk servant by Pietro Rotari indicate just this aesthetic enjoyment and play between art and reality (illus. 177). 'Pictures of lost happiness', Diderot wrote of this kind of taste, 'adorn the walls of our grand houses. Behind the fences of sumptuous frames, herds painted by Berchem or Paulus Potter graze on our walls beneath stucco mouldings.'[4]

In other words, a picture in a gilt frame of the late Baroque or Neoclassical period is Kant's ideal of beauty, static and harmonious, its inner world lacking contact with the real world. However, the Romantic conception of beauty exhibits dynamism. Beauty can reside in a process of becoming. The Romantic artist finds subject matter not in antiquity but in the real world around him, and in so doing imparts dynamism to the very picture frame. Romantic art being in perpetual dispute about science, literature, philosophy and religion, the frame of a Romantic painting takes on a load of corresponding meanings, objects and attributes that help the viewer correlate what he sees in the picture with reality. Picture and frame gradually

177 A. Zyablov, *Count Ivan Shuvalov's Cabinet of Arts*, 1779. State Historical Museum, Moscow.

became subordinated to tasks assigned by naturalistic aesthetics and psychological understanding of art. In these theoretical conditions, fantasy and imagination were excluded from perception, to be replaced by the power of passion and the psychology of sensations in the encounter with the artist's depiction, the sublimity and beauty of which were based on naturalistic representation and moral teaching. In this process, the beautiful could be juxtaposed with the ugly and the sombre, with horror and distortion. Irony, one of the main categories of the poetics of Romanticism, entered the concept of beauty. Hence, in Romantic tradition, in contrast to Baroque and Neoclassical, pictures and their frames led the viewer's mind not into the imagination or Kantian 'disinterested pleasure', but towards a sense of authenticity, which often bordered on excitement, fear, astonishment or arousal.

In Gogol's tale 'The Portrait', the main character, the artist Chertkov, is astounded when the image of an old man leaves the picture frame:

> The old man moved and suddenly leant on the bottom of the frame with both hands. At length, raising himself on his hands, he thrust out both legs and jumped out of the frame . . . Through the chink in the screen only the empty frame could be seen. (illus. 178)

Even the fateful package with the gold coins remains concealed in the frame.[5] This participation of the frame in the artist's game with space and time signifies, in the present author's view, a new interpretation of the world of the imagination and the world of reality. And here we arrive at the heart of the matter. In medieval culture the symbolism of the frame was determined from the divine viewpoint. From the Renaissance onwards, the aesthetics of reception saw the picture frame as a matter of the viewer's perception. But in the Romantic period the artist became concerned not so much with the viewer as with the possibility of applying the norms and principles of art to life, of making art influence life, and so making the boundaries between them less rigid. In the field of painting, this process took the form of the gradual *abolition* of the frame-as-window. The frame now followed the new approaches to painting, becoming part of the artist's overall intention and, planned by the artist himself, came to carry a load of supplementary meanings. In the second half of the nineteenth



178 Yevgeniy Kibrik's illustration to Gogol's story 'The Portrait'.

century, under the influence of the photographic frame, the picture frame moved into the composition itself, and eventually, with the advent of Cubism, it was abolished, with the loss of linear perspective and the view-through-a-window from a single vantage-point that had been assumed since the Renaissance, the artist's aim now being to show an object from different viewpoints simultaneously. An abstract painting has no need of a frame, having transformed itself into an 'ideal object' making its impact on the world, going beyond the confines of the frame, seeking to overcome the boundaries between art and life. An abstract painting does not copy reality, but aims to represent an 'idea' and the essence of phenomena, as Ortega y Gasset observed:

> The law predetermining great turning-points in painting is surprisingly simple. First came representations of objects, then of sensations, and at last, of ideas . . . The artist devoted his attention first to external reality, next to the subjective, and then passed to the intrasubjective.[6]

In other words, a revolution in aesthetic viewpoint took place among the European avant-garde between 1910 and 1920. Receptive theory in which the viewer's interpretation of a work was central was replaced by an aesthetic in which the viewpoint of the artist, with his ideas aimed at reconstructing the world, was primary.

In Russian painting, the seeds for this new direction were launched by Vasiliy Vasil'yevich Vereshchagin (1842–1904), whose experiments with the framing of perception arose not from doubts as to the nature of reality – such as would be felt by the Russian avant-garde – but from a desire to demonstrate it convincingly. Declaring himself a 'Realist', this artist turned out to be essentially a crypto-Romantic, and reflected the leading trends in European visual culture. A pupil of Jean-Léon Gérôme in Paris (1864–7), a prominent representative of academic orientalism, he adopted the photographic precision of his master's technique and absorbed his passion for daring journeys in search of exotic eastern subjects.[7] In the process he brought a distinctive new conception of exhibitions to European Romanticism and forged new links between painting and literature.

On the one hand Vereshchagin pursued a naturalistic interest in 'prosaic realism' that often looked like a natural-historical approach, nourished by scientific-positivist ideas and naturalistic aesthetics, with priority given to empirical research of the surrounding world through the collection of facts and personal observation. On the other hand, however, Vereshchagin was attracted by the new rhetorical systems, even anticipating the cinema, with the latest technological inventions such as photography, panoramic effects and various forms of reproduction playing a part both in his method of composition and his way of displaying his pictures.[8] The attempt to reproduce life in art led to original designs of picture frames and the discovery of new subjects. Furthermore, giving life theatrical grandeur, Vereshchagin not only followed the norms of literary texts but, a participant in and witness of military action, also frequently sought out theatricalized ways of exhibiting his battle canvases. A consciously anti-rhetorical purpose, subjectively interpreted by Vereshchagin as closeness to reality, would in fact be a mirror image of 'hidden' rhetoric.

So much is clear from documents, photographs and picture frames designed by the artist held in

the main museums of Russia. Vereshchagin was one of the first Russian artists to plan his exhibitions as original integrated ensembles occupying the aesthetic spaces characteristic of the Romantic era. He mounted no fewer than 66 exhibitions in his lifetime: 21 of them in Russia and 45 in Western Europe and the United States.[9] His first one-man show opened in London in April 1873 and came to St Petersburg and Moscow in 1874; it comprised paintings, drawings and studies in the so-called Turkestan series, the product of two journeys in Central Asia in 1867–8 and 1869–70. This was followed by the celebrated Indian, Balkan and Napoleonic series of paintings, the first two of which resulted from the artist's journeys in India and personal participation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8. All these series travelled to almost every European capital as well as the principal cities of Russia and America. They made an extraordinarily powerful impact of an ultra-realistic kind. 'Before us is naked reality,' wrote the critic of the St Petersburg newspaper *Molva* in 1880,[10] and the year before the Paris newspaper *Le Gaulois* called Vereshchagin the first Russian painter to give a real impression of war. His work was said to 'hold the highest interest' not only for its realism but also for its philosophic meaning.[11] 'Vereshchagin has invented a completely new language and thus inscribed a unique name in the annals of the art of our day', was the opinion of an exhibition of 1900 expressed in the journal *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaya promyshlennost'* (Art and the Art Industry).[12]

What the viewer saw at Vereshchagin's exhibitions was a symbolic system no less complex than those created in the settings of churches and palaces. The distinguishing feature of Vereshchagin's system, however, was that it aimed not to contrast with reality but to imitate it. This artist's exhibitions created the illusion of reality. All aspects of the aesthetic space they occupied were closely coordinated with the illusionistic conception of the frame-as-window. A special role was played in this connection by Vereshchagin's introduction of real objects into his exhibition space – standards, weapons, uniforms, tropical plants and all kinds of striking-looking ethnographic articles belonging to the times and peoples depicted in his paintings. With the help of these objects picture frames were harmonized with the overall ensemble of each exhibition and complemented the paintings themselves. We may remember how in Pop art an object is placed in an unexpected context in which it is out of place and seen in isolation, losing its original function and acquiring an idea-bearing role. In Vereshchagin's exhibitions real objects were employed with quite a different purpose – to widen the *psychological context* of the paintings. A painting and a real object placed beside it afforded obvious opportunity for comparison of the real-life with the imaginary. Outside the context of art, the concrete object belonged to 'reality', but in the artistic context of the exhibition it was transformed into a creation of the imagination, an art object, making the boundary between the real and the imaginary flexible. Thanks to the objects that the viewer's eye met with both in the picture and in actuality, the heavy gilt picture frame seemed to become thinner and to slide away from the viewer's field of vision, tending towards invisibility, leaving concrete objects and images side by side occupying the same space. At the same time the frame began to perform the function of linking the picture with reality on the level of sensations. According

overleaf: 179 Exhibition of works by Vasiliy Vereshchagin held after his death, St Petersburg, 1904.





to naturalistic aesthetic theory, a 'sensation' is an impulse received from outside, that is, in this instance from the picture, while the viewer's creation of an image on the basis of a sensation is a mental reaction to encountering an object of contemplation. Hence the combination of a frame and a concrete object placed next to it produced 'a strong original sensation'.

In the photographs of the exhibition of Vereshchagin's work held after his death in 1904 we see rugs, weapons, furniture, plants and the like (illus. 179). The organizers of the exhibition were clearly aiming to reproduce the effect of the artist's exhibitions held during his lifetime, and above all to harmonize the real-life objects with the styles of wall decoration and lighting so as to strengthen the 'primary impact' made by the paintings. Eastern rugs also featured in the Vereshchagin exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery in 1898 (illus. 180). Placed in front of a painting and surrounded by a partition, they not only evoked a sensation of the 'exotic East' and helped to create the atmosphere of 'primitive lands', but also displayed a fundamentally different approach to picture display in comparison with eighteenth-century practice. In the earliest art gallery in Russia, it may be recalled –



180 Works by Vasiliy Vereshchagin in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1898.

the Picture Room in the Catherine Palace, Tsarskoye Selo, built to F. B. Rastrelli's design in 1755 – paintings served purely as wall decoration, as in Shuvalov's picture cabinet of 1779. In the eighteenth-century 'trellis' style of hanging, pictures were placed contiguously according to the principles of symmetry, size and general palette, their thin frames not only separating them individually but also knitting them into a single ensemble.

During the second half of the nineteenth century art exhibitions aimed at imitation of the real world, as did painting itself, and it was a recognized means of acquiring knowledge of the surrounding world. Hence at Vereshchagin's exhibitions the wall space was 'dematerialized' by black or maroon velvet draping so that the effect of the paintings as windows into the 'real world' would be enhanced. 'The whole of the exhibition space would be decorated in the most effective way,' the artist's son recalls. 'Against the dark maroon wall drapings the pictures stood out strikingly in their gilt frames.'[13]

A further means of making pictures 'stand out' was achieved by special lighting, which Vereshchagin employed on the advice of Vladimir Stasov for his first one-man exhibition held in St Petersburg in 1874. 'Artistic use of lighting', in fact, was an important creative task that Vereshchagin developed alongside such a major figure as Arkhip Kuindzhi (1842–1910), who in the course of his experiments with lighting displayed a single picture on its own, *Moonlit Night* (*Lunnaya noch'*). This painting was exhibited with a black frame in a dark room with directed light enhancing the effect of moonlight.[14] Electric lamps illuminating memorial objects and Vereshchagin's paintings also created effects typical of the panorama, the theatre and the photographic studio in the age of realism. Varied lighting of drapes made it possible to display canvases with dramatic contrasts, which were brought out still further by the gleam of the gilt frames ordered by the artist for each separate series of paintings and frequently for his studies and sketches, which not only outlined the pictures but also won extra light for them.

At the Turkestan Exhibition of 1869 in St Petersburg Vereshchagin showed paintings, studies and drawings alongside the zoological and geological collections of his companions with whom he had undertaken ethnographic expeditions in the Syrdar'ya and Semirechye provinces in 1867–8. This was one of the so-called colonial exhibitions that toured Europe, acquainting the public with the exotic cultures of 'barbarous lands', showing the 'wildness' of Central Asian peoples, their fundamentally un-Western way of life and stage of development.[15] The principles of these 'colonial' exhibitions were repeated in international and all-Russian exhibitions of arts and manufactures whose pavilions included all kinds of manufactured art objects, original paintings, popular craft work and striking species of flora and fauna (illus. 181). From the outset of his career Vereshchagin would continue to research new ways of making an impact on his viewers, and the simultaneous display of pictures and objects of material culture at 'colonial' and arts and manufactures exhibitions seems to have particularly caught his attention and been refined by him. After recording his first 'Romantic' experience of the East in the photographic album *Turkestan: Studies from Life* (1874),[16] he began to develop his original concept of a theatricalized exhibition with combined display of paintings, his personal ethnographic and military collections and literary work, with exhibition personnel in costume, music and



special lighting effects, all constituting an undoubted novelty in European cultural history of the second half of the nineteenth century.

There were major exhibitions of Vereshchagin's work between 1880 and 1883 in St Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Budapest and Brussels. The Vienna exhibition of October and November 1881, showing paintings in the Indian and Balkan series and some work from Turkestan, stood out for its originality of design, which, in the words of Vladimir Stasov, was 'of an unusual kind'. In the stairway and the rooms of the exhibition Tibetan, Indian and Uzbek carpets were hung, and in the showcases were displays of national costume of various epochs, cult objects of Eastern religions, and articles from ethnographic collections. This exhibition also contained tiger- and bearskins and stuffed birds. The rooms were electrically lit, and music created a special atmosphere. Sonic accompaniment to the display of pictures had been familiar since the early nineteenth century, the Gonzaga Theatre (1817–18) in Archangel'skoye

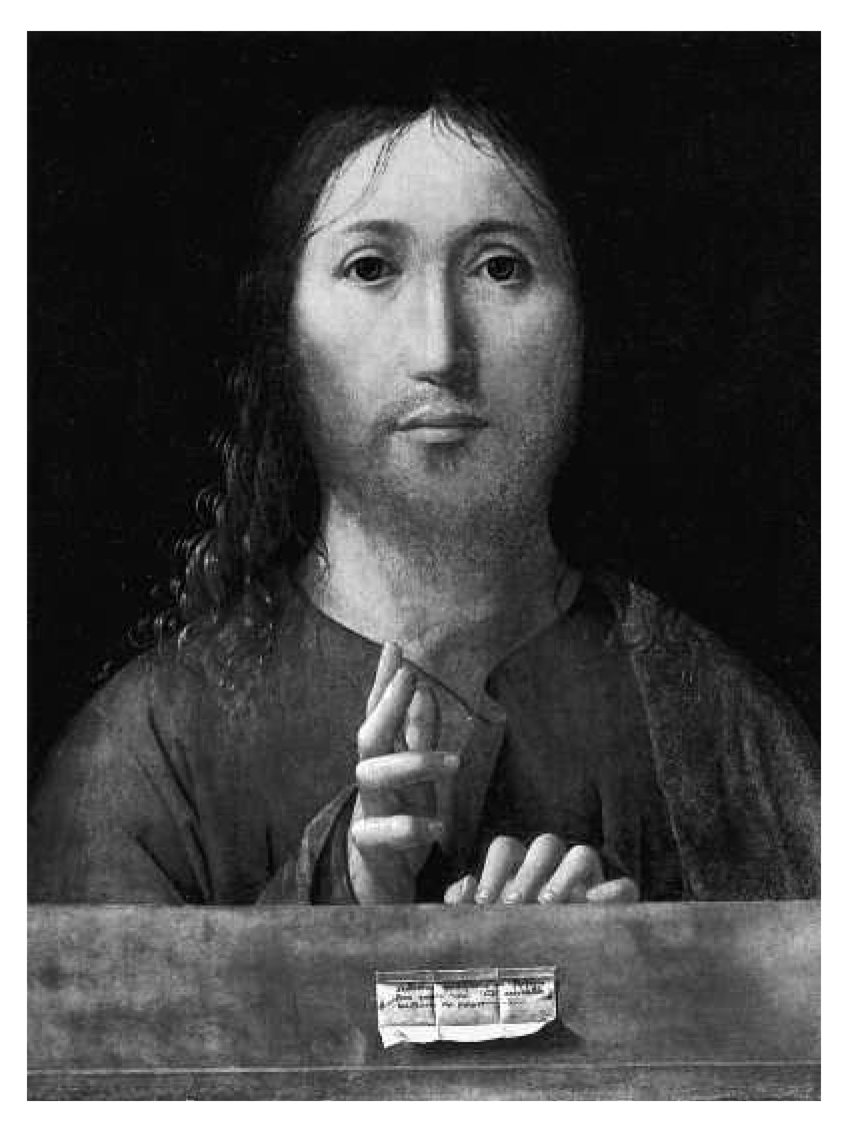
181 Display of works by Konstantin Korovin in the Pavilion of the Far North at the *All-Russian Arts and Manufactures Exhibition* at Nizhniy Novgorod, 1896.

outside Moscow providing an early example. On this occasion Vereshchagin himself, sometimes together with the critic Stasov, chose the music, which was an important element in the exhibition.[17]

No less striking were Vereshchagin's exhibitions in Berlin in 1882 and St Petersburg in 1883, also showing paintings from the Turkestan, Indian and Balkan series, with similar music and electric lighting, and this time with tropical plants and exotic objects to the fore. Whereas in the earlier exhibition catalogues only the paintings had been described and inscriptions on frames explained, now special attention was paid to *mise en scène*: the catalogue did not separate 'exotic objects' from the paintings themselves. The introduction to the 1883 catalogue, by N. Sobko, enumerated twelve forms of Indian and Tibetan rosaries, 'precious stones with sacred images of the Buddha seated on a lotus flower', silver feminine ornaments, vessels and utensils, eagles and hawks from the Himalayas, tiger, panther and Kashmiri bear hides, deer antlers and much else.[18]

At all these exhibitions the traditional frame-as-window matched the precise perspectival construction of Vereshchagin's paintings, or, as a contemporary put it, the artist's 'ultra-realistic tendency'.[19] It was the frame that had come to make a picture not just an object among other objects, but also an object of contemplation. The development of illusionism and the psychological impact of pictures, however, enhanced the role of inscriptions on frames, giving them sometimes metonymic, sometimes metaphorical significance. To the former category belong such works as *Mortally Wounded* (*Smertel'no ranennyy*, 1873, illus. 167), *They Attack Unawares! . . .* (*Napadayut vrasplokh! . . .*, 1871, illus. 168) and *Encirclement and Pursuit* (*Okruzhili – presleduyut*, 1872). The most celebrated example of the metaphorical category in Vereshchagin's work is *Apotheosis of War* (*Apofeoz voyny*, 1871, illus. 188). All these paintings, today in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, would seem sure indication that for Vereshchagin the rhetoric of the frame was put to the service of his main task as an artist: demolition of the Romantic cult of military glory that had formed in the Napoleonic era. He conceived his exhibitions as grim tales of the business of war, which he set about de-aestheticizing. It will be worth examining more closely his means of expressing his attitude to war and realizing his ultimate aim.

Departure from the rules always raises the viewer's level of attention. Vereshchagin took advantage of this in using, in his exhibitions, what was in fact an age-old principle, that of a *series* of works – the principle of a narrative told in paintings. He thought of this aspect of his work as innovatory, writing to Vladimir Stasov that he had 'overstepped' the 'routine' convention of being content to depict a single moment in painting and leaving 'the consequences of that moment to literature'. This bringing together of painting and literature was significant: Vereshchagin called his series *poemy*, or 'narrative poems', individual pictures 'chapters', and studies for them 'facts'.[20] The appearance of a card or plaque on a picture frame bearing the artist's name and the title of the picture is of course an established historical fact in the evolution of the conception of the artist and his social status. Renaissance painters painted such plaques directly on the canvas, with their name and date of completion of the painting, or sometimes words addressed to the viewer as from the subject of the picture, as was Antonello's practice in his portraits and other works: 'Antonello



182 Antonello da Messina, *Christ Blessing*, *c.* 1465. National Gallery, London.

da Messina painted me' (illus. 182).[21] Italian and Netherlandish painters of the fifteenth century often painted texts of various kinds on frames, including direct statements from persons depicted, and in the nineteenth century these caught the attention of the Nazarenes and Pre-Raphaelites such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt, who began to put on their frames not only their names but also verse, literary quotations and words attributed to the leading figure depicted in a painting. All such uses of the frame in Vereshchagin's work with the aim of enhancing the impact of a painting followed the poetics of Russian Romanticism, and he attached particular importance not only to the title of a painting and the inscription on its frame but also to the commentary on the work in the exhibition catalogue.

The 'heroic epic' *Barbarians* (*Varvary*) occupied the central place in the exhibition of the Turkestan series of 1874. This was a cycle of seven paintings (now in the Tretyakov Gallery) narrating the obliteration of a Russian unit in a clash with Central Asian troops, among them *They Attack Unawares!* …, *Triumph* (*Torzhestvuyut*, 1872), *Offering Trophies* (*Predstavlyayut trofei*, 1872) and *At the Tomb of a Saint – Giving Thanks to the Almighty* (*U grobnitsy svyatogo – blagodaryat Vsevyshnego*, 1873). However, the work that opened the whole exhibition was *Mortally Wounded* (illus. 183), painted in Munich five years after the artist witnessed the scene depicted during the defence of the fortress of Samarkand by the Russians: a running soldier dying. Artist and soldier-hero each in the face of death – this was what the viewer was offered, not merely to see but to *feel*. The feeling of tragedy was heightened by the monumental frame with glazing over the picture. The black mount with stark gold ornament gave the



painting a memorial character, making it look like a picture on a tomb and at the same time like a framed photograph.

The metonymic character of this 'photographic frame' was heightened when the viewer read the soldier's dying words inscribed on the frame immediately above the image: 'Oh, they've killed me, comrades! . . . Killed me. Oh, I'm going to die!' – in its way a spoken epitaph such as is often seen on graves and memorial obelisks. The desire to give the illusion of life led Vereshchagin to use an old epigraphic formula, an inscription on the frame performing the role of a speaking gravestone, and also reminiscent of the traditional dedicatory epigram. Giving speech to the image, such an epigram, like an epitaph, also embodied a relationship with a painting or statue as if it were a living, speaking person.[22] Vereshchagin

183 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Mortally Wounded*, 1873. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



provided this kind of epigram, in his own verse, to his painting *Forgotten* (*Zabytyy*, 1871), depicting a dead soldier left behind by his comrades:

> Tell my young widow
> I've married another;
> Our matchmaker was a keen sabre,
> We were put to sleep
> By the damp earth, our mother.[23]

The inscription on the frame of *They Attack Unawares!* . . . has a more complex meaning (illus. 184, 185, 186). A Russian detachment, forced into a huddle, is firing back at the advancing enemy. Someone runs for help, someone else retreats, someone lies dead. On the frame is the epitaph: 'Let our bones lie here. We shall not shame the land of Russia. The dead have no shame.' This might look similar to Vereshchagin's verse epitaph just quoted, lifting the whole scene to a general epic level. The case, however, is not so straightforward. If one looks at the painting with earlier Russian history in mind, the inscription clearly recalls an episode related by the early twelfth-century Kievan chronicler Nestor, in which Prince Svyatoslav and his men were surrounded by Greek forces. Pronouncing the words: 'Let our bones lie here; for the dead have no shame', Svyatoslav unsheathed his sword and led his men into battle. It is known that the historian Nikolay Karamzin, considering suitable subjects for pictorial representation for the Academy of Arts, recommended this episode as worthy of the brush of a painter who would depict the warriors of Rus' 'in the swift action of heroic inspiration'. 'This is the moment for a painting!' the celebrated writer exclaimed.[24] Painting a scene from real life juxtaposed with the wording of the academic subject, Vereshchagin brought picture and frame together in the manner of the comic strip and the *lubok*, the popular

184 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *They Attack Unawares!* . . . , 1871. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.





woodcut. The satirical effect of the aphoristic inscription lay in the manifest discrepancy between text and picture, being based on the absurd proposition that the connection provided by the quotation from a Russian chronicle and the well-known historical episode was as necessary for the artist as the connection with real life. Hence the increase of detail to be seen in the painting: while the frame recalls the simple scene from ancient history, the picture demonstrates quite new truths of war – despair, the proximity of death, hope for rescue, and so on.[25]

Inscriptions performed special functions in a number of Vereshchagin's paintings. Exploiting the favourite European Romantic theme of 'barbarism' in his own way, he painted some scenes of genuine horror – *Offering Trophies*, *Triumph*, *At the Tomb of a Saint – Giving Thanks to the Almighty* and finally *Apotheosis of War* among works already mentioned. The upper part of the frame of *Triumph* (illus. 187)

185 Inscription at the top of the frame.

186 Inscription on the frame.



bears the quotation: 'There is no God but Allah. There is no God but Allah', and the lower: 'Thus Allah commands'. This painting depicts the victors' gruesome triumph: Muslim warriors are gathered in a square in front of a mosque, at the centre of which decapitated heads of Russian soldiers are displayed on poles. The quotation from the Koran on the picture frame serves both as an epitaph and as a 'chapter heading' (as already noted, Vereshchagin termed individual paintings of a series 'chapters'). In so far as these words may be understood to be uttered by the mullah depicted at the centre of the square, the painting can be further interpreted in the spirit both of a memorial obelisk and a dramatic scene. The frame inscription for *Apotheosis of War* (illus. 188) performs a quite different role; it was intended by the artist as an epilogue to the whole series, the 'heroic epic' *Barbarians*. A pyramid of skulls is depicted, with crows alighting on it. The title of the painting, inscribed on the upper part of the frame, makes it a metaphor of war, while the inscription below, 'To all conquerors, present, past and future', serves as a dedication of the series as a whole.

All these inscriptions were supplemented in exhibition catalogues by articles on the everyday life

187 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Triumph*, 1872. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



of peoples depicted, ethical and moral discussions and social-historical sketches that were typical of real-life stories, newspaper reportage and accounts of scientific expeditions in the second half of the nineteenth century (illus. 189). Also found in catalogues were imaginative presentations of events depicted, which included dialogues, poems, *chastushki* (rhymed ditties on topical themes) and quotations from national epics and the Koran. For example, the catalogue entry for the painting *Envoys* (*Parlamentery*; 1873, Munich) included a snatch of dialogue representing the negotiations of the two sides: '"Surrender!" – "Go to the Devil!"' The same style was seen in a commentary on two paintings with the same title, *At the Fortress Wall* (*U krepostnoy steny*), depicting consecutive scenes, the first being introduced with the caption 'Ssh! Let them come!', and the second with 'They've come!'[26] Vereshchagin's method of hanging his paintings was reminiscent, therefore, of a stage production of acts and scenes separated by the curtain and intervals. These portions of time and space contained the action. In a series of Vereshchagin's paintings each portion of time and space was a static scene.

It was to activate the interpretative process that Vereshchagin gave his frames such a high degree of

188 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Apotheosis of War*, 1871. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



significance – both in their belonging to each individual painting and in their function of joining the paintings together in a *montage* with its own concrete meanings. The sequence in which paintings in a series were to be viewed was laid down by the catalogue, and its articles enhanced the 'theatricalization' of the exhibition space, making the paintings 'speak' and the viewer reflect on their meanings. On this level the textual framing in the catalogue was not distinct from the material frame. The latter focused the attention on the picture and could add a dimension to the scene depicted by means of the inscription, which was clearly designed to be read aloud; while the 'frame' of the catalogue placed the images in a connected storyline, a technique essentially borrowed from the comic strip and the *lubok*. The sequence of pictures in a series could be taken on the one hand as reliably laid down by life itself, or on the other as the result of the artist's own aesthetic choice, which guaranteed the authenticity of the story of his journey, of the subject of his epic.

Thus the catalogue of the 1874 Turkestan Exhibition indicates that the most important group of paintings in the series, the *Barbarians* sequence, was shown with studies and drawings preceding and following it, that is, provided with that spatial-temporal framing we have already seen in regard to the coronation of Alexander III in 1883. This montage led the viewer to understand that the scenes depicted in the series were not the product of the artist's imagination but 'seen' in real life; the studies from life shown at the beginning and end of the exhibition were just the kind of 'documentary material' that was considered to afford the closest approach to authenticity in the Romantic age of painting. So the catalogue entry on the picture shown first in the exhibition, *Mortally Wounded* – in its way a 'study from life' – described the event depicted as having actually occurred, in accordance with the inscription on the frame. That is to say, this painting-cum-study was presented as the beginning of a narrative about an experience not to be met with in ordinary everyday life – the proximity of death, experienced by the artist himself, witness of real-life events.

This 'heroic epic' was followed in the exhibition by an extensive selection of Vereshchagin's drawings of architecture, ornamental objects, articles of everyday life, studies of racial types – everything that drew the viewer into the atmosphere of 'barbaric lands' and made it possible to understand and feel their wholly different, 'lower' level of historical evolution in comparison with European civilization. For example, the painting

189 Cover of the catalogue of an exhibition of Vereshchagin's works, St Petersburg, 1874.

Offering Trophies in the *Barbarians* cycle, wholly in the manner of Gérôme's scenes – but reduced to brutal frankness – was thus described by the artist: 'Scene in the palace of Samarkand. The victors, in accordance with the barbarian custom of those countries, cut off the heads of those they have killed and carry them in bags hanging from their saddles to present them to the Emir . . .' The following text set out to convince the viewer of the historical authenticity of the well-known painting *Apotheosis of War*: 'This picture is historically true: Timur, or Tamerlane, who bathed the whole of Asia and parts of Europe in blood and is now considered a great saint by all Central Asian Mohammedans, everywhere left similar monuments to his greatness.'

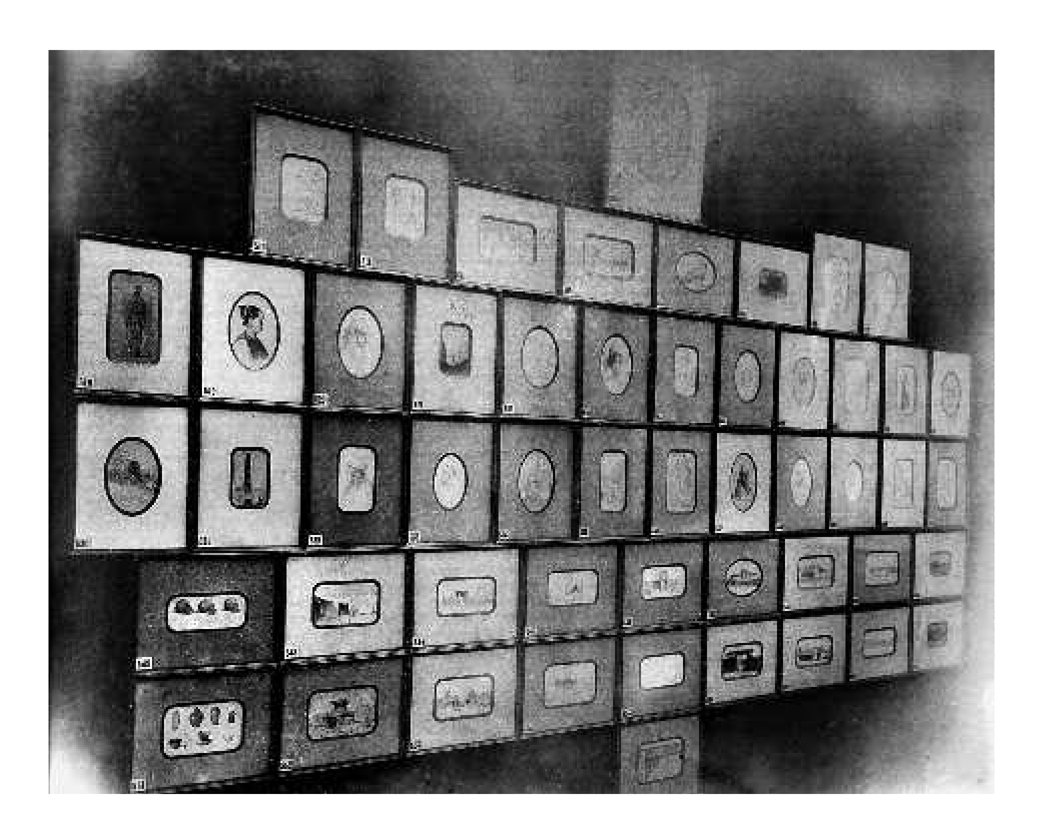
The catalogue also contained historical and ethnographic background. The artist gave this commentary, for example, on *Tamerlane's Doors* (*Dveri Tamerlana*, 1872): 'Here the doors of the Central Asian sovereign's palace at the time of Bukharan supremacy are depicted. The dress of the sentries is typical of the period.' Vereshchagin placed the painting *At the Tomb of a Saint – Giving Thanks to the Almighty* next to *The Tomb of Tamerlane (The Green Stone)* (*Grobnitsa Tamerlana [Zelyonyy kamen']*), in his description of which he wrote in the manner of an archaeological scholar:

> This painting shows the tomb in its present-day condition. Tamerlane is buried beneath the dark-green stone. On either side of his tomb are the graves of two of his relatives, and at its head, the grave of the mentor of his youth. In the crypt below, stone slabs cover his grave. The mosque was built during Tamerlane's lifetime by builders brought from China and Persia . . .

The authenticity of these paintings of scenes from Turkestan is emphasized in phrases like 'painted on the spot' or footnotes such as 'Here I should mention the daily concerts that my companions and I were obliged to listen to in this region – the roar of tigers in the mornings, and around sunset the melancholy howling of the gaunt, fierce wolves of the steppe.' This 'artist's note' belonged to the commentary on painting no. 89, *The Ruins of Great Kumirna* (*Razvaliny Bol'shoy Kumirny*), painted 'in the province of Ili, on the Kul'dzha road; now ruined'.[27]

Vereshchagin's ethnographic drawings of physical types and articles of everyday life were placed at the end of the catalogue, without commentary, simply as 'documentary data'. However, in accordance as they were with the epistemics of natural history, they played no less a part in determining the interpretation of the paintings than the articles and commentaries. An old photograph of an exhibition of Vereshchagin's Turkestan drawings in the Tretyakov Gallery, showing the artist's method of display, vividly opens up for us the nineteenth-century world of 'objective facts' (illus. 190). Architectural structures, articles of dress, working implements, crockery, objects from archaeological excavations, skulls and portraits – all are presented to the eye in precise rows of uniform frames with each item numbered, in the style of a natural history collection. Before us is the strict and knowledgeable positivist frame, the scientific-aesthetic instrument of an era of belief in science and progress.

Vereshchagin wrote to Vladimir Stasov that he intended the inscriptions to be seen on frames and



explicated in catalogues 'to supplement, with their tragicomic effect', the impact made by his 'natural' and 'true paintings'.[28] The fact of the matter is that his frames marking a rejection of the old painterly rhetoric ushered in a new rhetoric orientated towards 'tragicomic effect' and taking in not only the Romantic and Realist traditions but also the *popular primitive*. This complex synthesis helped Vereshchagin to hold the attention, placing his viewer in an unexpected situation that was eventually to prove characteristic of avant-garde culture. Revealing, in his exhibitions, elements of brutality and 'astonishing' situations and explicating them in his guides and catalogues, he aimed to set up a new kind of relationship with the viewer.

But his exhibitions caused dissatisfaction among both art critics and officialdom. 'To assist in the appreciation of his paintings', wrote one critic in the newspaper *Russkoye slovo* in 1895 on Vereshchagin's exhibition of his 1812 series,

> the artist provides a commentary. So for example, in order to understand what Napoleon was thinking when he sat alone in church with paper in hand, the viewer standing in front of the picture must read *eight pages* of explanatory text in the artist's guide, whilst *ten pages* are devoted to Napoleon's thoughts on his great march. This is odd. None of the well-known paintings of Napoleon past or present has needed any commentary . . . [author's emphasis].[29]

Another critic made ironic play with Vereshchagin's exhibition 'system':

190 Display of drawings by Vereshchagin in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1898.

> The exhibition *catalogue* is wonderfully planned and designed. In the pedagogic field it reminds one of a gradual advance *from primers to short guides and then full textbooks*. For 3 kopecks you get a *list* of exhibits; for 20 kopecks, a *guide* with explanatory text. Both the list and the guide have references to *supplements*, of which there are only three, numbered with Roman numerals, I, II, III. Enquiries addressed to unusually polite sales-girls establish that these supplements so assiduously cited in the list of exhibits and the guide are in fact books by Vereshchagin, on some unremarkable Russians, the Northern Dvina, and Napoleon. This is an extraordinarily useful system, which cannot be used by any Russian artist except Vereshchagin on account of all the others' complete lack of any kind of literary oeuvre [author's emphasis].[30]

Politics, as is well known, allows no comedy or games. The authorities, therefore, took Vereshchagin's inscriptions on frames as mockery of the Russian army – and even of the emperor himself. This was the case, for example, with the inscription 'The tsar's name-day' on the frame of the painting *Alexander II at Pleven, 30 August 1877* (1878–9), which depicted the emperor sitting on a chair looking at the battlefield. This inscription turned the depicted scene unambiguously into an ironic narrative about the defeat suffered by the Russian army at Pleven (as a result of the timing of the Russian order to attack to coincide with the emperor's name-day), and it was removed before the exhibition was shown at the Winter Palace. Clearly expressing the view of official circles, the war minister D. A. Milyutin recalled:

> Vereshchagin, undoubtedly a talented artist, has a strange habit of choosing the most unattractive subjects for his paintings, of depicting only the gloomy, ugly side of life, and furthermore, giving his pictures inscriptions taking the form of malicious epigrams laying claims to misanthropic wit . . . He gives the picture showing the emperor at Pleven, in view of the bloodshed, the title: 'The tsar's name-day'. Anyway, this title, which must have made a great show in Paris, was removed here.[31]

In other words, the authenticity that Vereshchagin stood for always had a problematic ideological dimension. Obstacles always lurked in the way of the artist's reflection of reality as he saw it; a factual and documentary orientation could still not be free from rhetoric and preconception; since there was no such thing as 'bare facts', they would invariably be set within a political, philosophical or moral-psychological context. And this was what was provided by the framework of Vereshchagin's catalogues aiming to direct the viewer's visual perception.

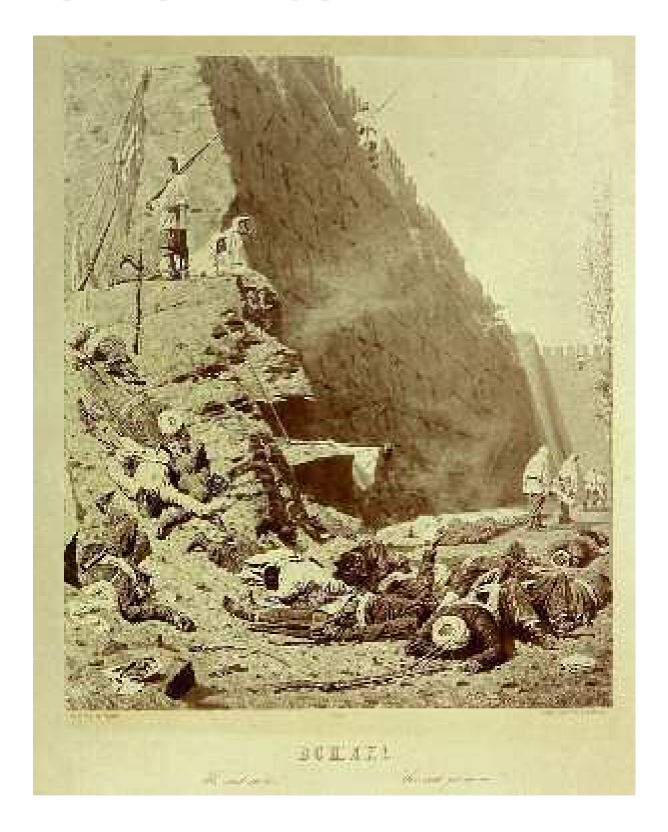
The Painting as Photographic Exposure

The invention of photography by Joseph Nicéphore Niepce (1765–1833) and Louis Daguerre (1787–1851) brought about a revolution in popular perception of visual images. The much-quoted pronouncement 'From today, painting is dead' was delivered by the French painter Paul Delaroche, founder of the genre of historical painting, in 1838 when Daguerre made a personal appeal to him to support his new invention. He also said that Daguerre's photographs were 'so perfect in relation to some of the most important aspects of art that they should be', and in fact were already becoming, 'the subject of observation and study by even the most gifted artists'. In the history of visual culture, this meant that photography had acquired the status of 'authentic reality'; here was a definitive confirmation of the view that 'photographic copies alone can reproduce nature'.[32]

Hence photography became a new means of visual communication on a comparable scale of significance, perhaps, to computer technology today. Replacing engraving and lithography, photography became the illustrative companion to everyday life, exercising a huge emotional influence through the second half of the nineteenth century and the whole of the twentieth. It also produced changes in the ways in which the easel painting was *perceived*. As Walter Benjamin showed, high art lost the aura that had surrounded it since the Renaissance, having been founded in a tradition in which the original image was seen as central. Now a painting, or icon, reached a mass public in reproduction, causing a profound upheaval in traditional values. In Benjamin's words:

> The technology of reproduction . . . takes the object reproduced out of the realm of tradition. Disseminating the reproduction, it replaces the unique manifestation of that object with a mass one. And enabling the reproduction to reach the perceiver, wherever he or she might be, it actualizes the object reproduced.[33]

It was not by chance that the Wanderers (Peredvizhniki), with their ideas of 'going to the people', made frequent use of photographic reproductions of their paintings; photography and the technique of reproduction made works of art available to a vast audience, and in doing so, gave rise to a new culture of visual images, notably illustrations in catalogues, the cheapness of which at Vereshchagin's exhibitions belonged to a well-thought-out promotional campaign and played an important part in the popularization of the artist's



191 Photograph of Vereshchagin's painting *They've Gone In!*, 1874.

work. Photographs even took the place of missing originals at exhibitions, and were on sale there and in specialized shops. 'At the exit from the exhibition,' the preface to the catalogue for one of Vereshchagin's exhibitions noted, 'photographs of both new and previous work by the artist are on sale, also the newly published books *Notes, Sketches and Reminiscences* by Vasiliy Vereshchagin, with the artist's drawings, and *Journey to the Himalayas*.'[34] Large-format photographs of paintings from the Turkestan series, produced by the Munich photographic studio Hanfstängel & Obernetter, were also on sale at A. Beggrov's shop on Nevsky Prospekt; these appeared in 1874 simultaneously with the photo-album *Turkestan: Studies from Nature*.[35]

During this period debate was raging between the proponents of photography and painting as to the aesthetic value of the former and its role in contemporary art. At first, the evolution of photography, as a new form of art, was closely connected with painting. A photographic composition was regarded as a process of work on a painting, and photographers called themselves artists and had the formal title of painters, being graduates of the Academy of Arts. Using methods of posed photography, they reproduced 'reality', building up scenes that were component parts of a photographic 'picture', exactly as painters did. However, before long it was painting that began to imitate photography. Many of Vereshchagin's paintings show the use of photographic methods and are framed in photographic style, which did not escape the notice of art critics. 'Do you know why my latest paintings have been criticized?' he wrote to Stasov in 1888:

> It's said that they lack composition, that they could be taken for photographs from real life, hand-coloured. First, this is not a bad thing, and secondly, they *do* have composition and creation – only you don't notice it, that doesn't mean it's bad.[36]

This desire of Vereshchagin's to conceal photographic methods in his paintings meant that his aim of getting close to reality led him both to make studies of real-life scenes and to take photographs himself, at a time when photographs were enhancing the status of original documentary material. Thus *Mortally Wounded* discussed above may be regarded as in its way a 'photoplate-picture', that is, as a photograph and a study from real life simultaneously (actually being neither. illus. 192). Of course, neither tripod camera nor study could capture the



192 Vereshchagin's *Mortally Wounded* unframed.

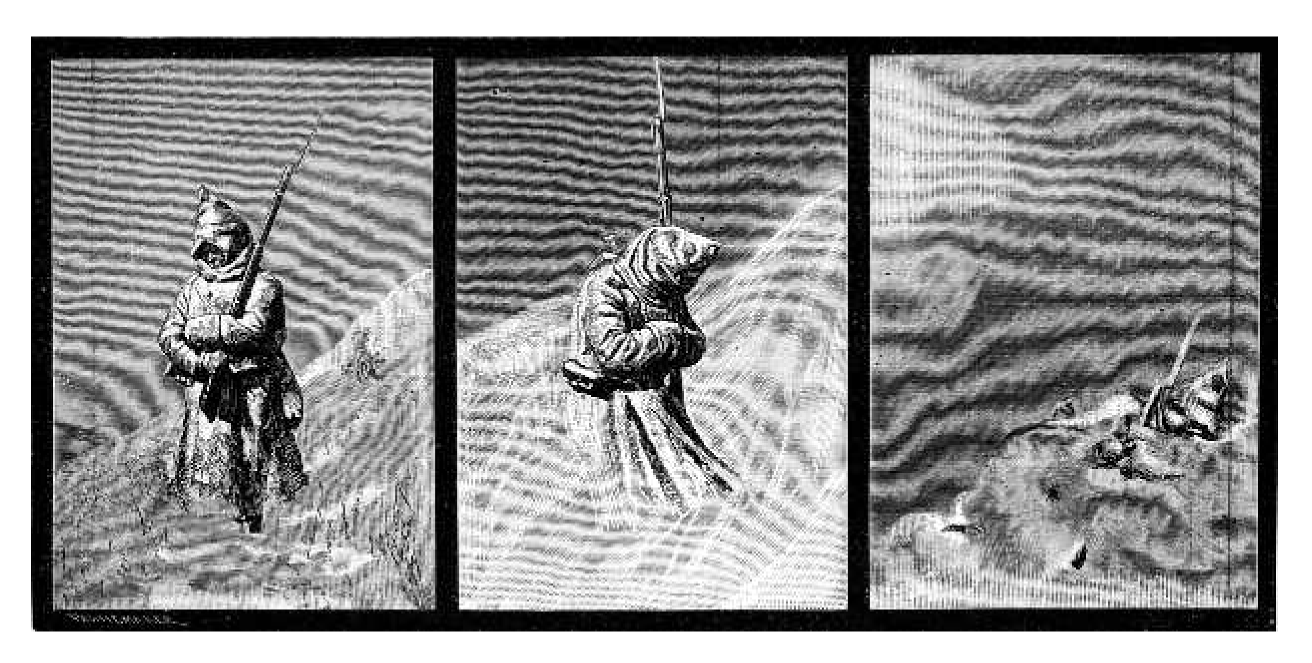


which might be thought of as a frame produced by the edge of the camera lens.

The effect of a photograph is even more convincingly achieved in the triptych of paintings *All Quiet on the Shipka* (*Na Shipke vsyo spokoyno*, 1878–9, illus. 194), set out as three photographic 'frames' resembling a sequence of shots taken with different exposure-times – the chronographic principle introduced to photography by the American Eadweard Muybridge and the Frenchman Etienne-Jules

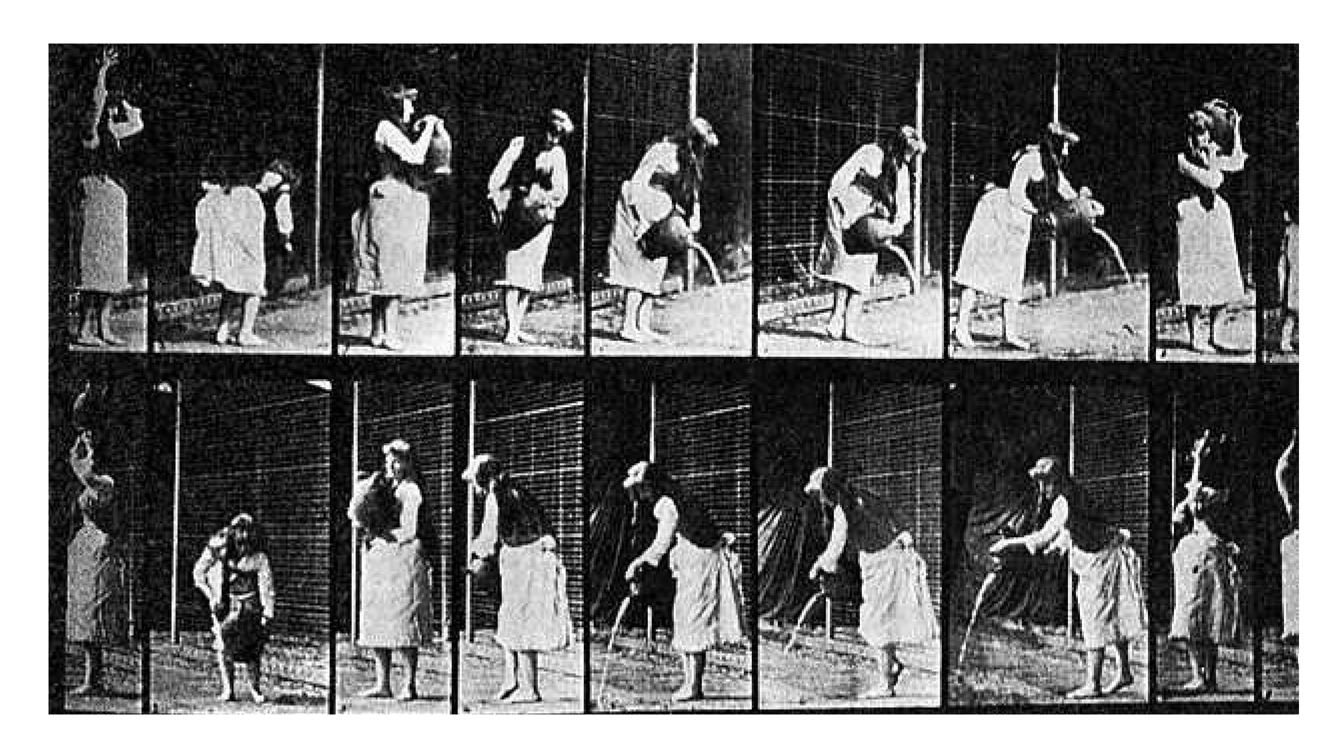
moment between life and death, as would, at a later date, Robert Capa's famous photograph *The Falling Soldier* (1936, illus. 193). But the depicted figure, the light, shade and movement in Vereshchagin's picture indicate his striving for the effect of photography, an impression strengthened by the black mount,

Marey, reproducing the effect of movement in a sequence of frames (illus. 195).[37] Vereshchagin's three framed images resembling photographic shots are designed to convey the same effect: change in time and space. For its first viewers the painting had the same impact of authenticity as



193 Robert Capa, *The Falling Soldier*, 1936, photograph.

194 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *All Quiet on the Shipka*, lithograph from an exhibition catalogue, 1883.



only photography had hitherto achieved. The situation between life and death falls into separate moments, and the black borders round each of the three 'shots' underline the fortuitousness and injustice of the scene of the soldier forgotten by his commander and freezing to death at his post. At first the eye appears to move from one frame to the next as it might follow the successive scenes of an icon of the life of a saint. In an icon, however, each frame-image is a 'given' in the life-story of a saint contained in a mythological spatial-temporal representation. The 'frames' of Vereshchagin's picture, on the other hand, show facts in the life of a real human being. They are contained in a historical model of time and space; each of them is unique and, what is crucial, achieved through empirical knowledge, that is, from observation of actuality, in the same way as images captured on a photographic plate. They are designed to convey the significance of individual moments in a human life.

The border of a photograph, like the edge of a photographic exposure, gradually merges into the picture. Its approximation to the material frame of a painting on canvas is an effect to be seen in the painting *Shipka-Sheynovo* (1878–9; Tretyakov Gallery), one of the most important pictures in the so-called Balkan Series devoted to the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–8 (illus. 196). General M. D. Skobelev's review of his troops after the victory at Shipka is depicted on a large canvas. The general, mounted on a grey, gallops along a rank of soldiers followed by his staff officers, among whom Vereshchagin portrays himself. Spatial depth is achieved by the placing of this scene in the middle distance, with the foreground, occupied by the dead bodies of the soldiers, providing a compositional 'frame' for the celebration of the victory won at

195 A photographic sequence by Eadweard Muybridge, 1879.



such cost. At the heart of the artist's quest for 'truthfulness to life', this frame builds up a rhetorical juxtaposition of 'true' and 'false' representations of war.

In the painting *Don't Disturb Them – Let Them Come Nearer!* (*Ne zamay – day podoyti!*, illus. 197), a central work in the series *The Old Partisan* (*Staryy partisan*, 1887–95; Historical Museum, Moscow), the compositional frame cuts off objects in the foreground, serving symbolically to create the image; it cuts off our field of vision, forcing the viewer's eye to focus both on it and on what is inside it, the objects that it excludes appearing to come out of the frame and approach the viewer. It is not by chance that this painting is reminiscent of a broken window: we see the figure in the middle of the picture as if through splinters of glass (the snow-laden stalks and foliage of plants), and these form their own frame and make a material window frame superfluous. First comes the frame of 'reality', clearly associated with the edge of a frame of photographic film. Here the photographic mode is concealed by the artist's compositional mode, acting as a signal for the viewer's perception of what is going on at the heart of the picture.

In other words, Vereshchagin once more encloses his historical 'fact' within the framing of the visual image that the viewer will take for reality itself – the photographic frame. Historians of painting have called this 'the placing of the frame within the picture plane'. The American scholar Meyer Schapiro examined the paintings of Degas (illus. 198) and Toulouse-Lautrec in this regard, concluding that this deep-structured composition

196 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Shipka-Sheynovo: General Skobelev below Shipka*, 1878–9. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



197 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Don't Disturb Them – Let Them Come Nearer!*, 1887–95. State Historical Museum, Moscow.



198 Edgar Degas, *Dancers*, 1883. Dallas Museum of Art.

was a late achievement of synthesis, the culmination of the evolution of the picture frame in European representative art.[38] According to Arnheim:

> The frame of a picture emerges from current debate as playing an interactive role with the unlimited space of the picture. This direction in art reached its furthest point in the nineteenth century, in the paintings of Degas, for example, who used the picture frame to cut off objects and human figures to a greater degree than had been seen before. This drew attention to the arbitrary nature of the line of delimitation drawn by the picture frame, and consequently to its sporadic decorative function.[39]

It follows from this that the deep-structured composition of certain paintings by Vereshchagin classifies them alongside the work of some French artists. Furthermore, there are grounds for concluding that not only Degas but Vereshchagin too anticipated the conception of the deep-structured photographic shot (combining close-up and long-range perspectives) to be developed later by Sergey Eisenstein.[40]

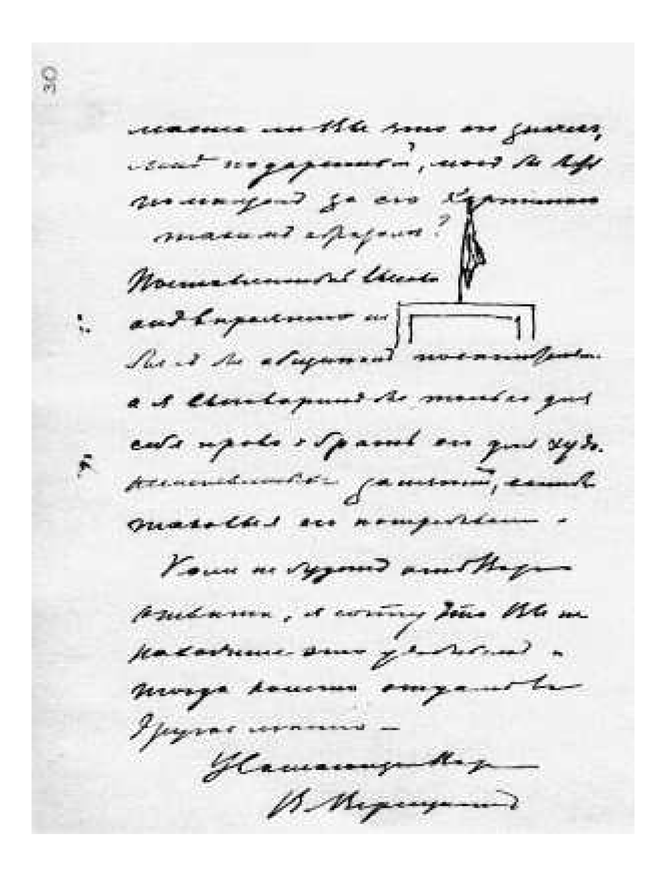
Aside from all this, there is no doubt that Vereshchagin's ideas on frames and exhibitions were directly influenced by photoreportage and the world of spectacle. To this he brought the aesthetic of 'the terrible truth', sensationalism, and play with the spatial boundary between picture

and object – everything, that is, calculated to seize the imagination and arouse different emotions. In the mid-nineteenth century photoreportage brought material drawn from life to the fore. The conception of the battle painting underwent a change. Battle pictures had hitherto featured one or a group of figures in the foreground associated with the triumphal theme, which was frequently enhanced by trophy ornament on frames – standards, weaponry and the like. Now the battle picture without a hero sprang up, its rhetoric founded on the non-depiction of battle itself; it was scenes before or after a battle that began to be depicted, the routine of military life, the burdens of wartime existence and the injustice of death. Photoreportage and paintings showed corpse-strewn battlefields, bivouacking soldiers, scenes of destruction and disaster. All this was contemporaneous with the Crimean War (1854–5), the first armed conflict to be covered by photography. Fenton and Robertson, Langlois, Méhédin, Durand-Brager and Lassimond, and the Rumanian Satmari – all these photographed fearful battlefields and showed real scenes of carnage to a wide public for the first time.[41] They were followed by artists: British and French painters in particular depicted killed and wounded soldiers, removing the heroic aura from the battle picture.[42] In his famous series of war paintings, Horace Vernet (1789–1863), with whom Vereshchagin has often been compared, made use of soldiers' and eyewitnesses' accounts of the Crimean War and Jean-Charles Langlois' photographs of Malakhov Kurgan.[43] 'I was somehow offended,' wrote Vereshchagin, referring to his Balkan series, 'when they called these paintings battle pictures – what an academic term! – these are paintings of Russian life, Russian history.'[44] In other words, war was now shown to be a part of 'the history of national life', commanding attention not through its outcome but through the problematics of life and death on which photographers and artists focused a fresh and objective eye.

Hence photoreportage from the front, with the presence of photographers and artists on the battlefield, gained special significance at this time, though the presence of artists in the theatre of war was not new. Jacques Callot (1592–1635) had depicted battles on the basis of materials collected on the battlefield. In the engravings of the *Siege of Breda* he portrayed himself sketching from life, treating war as an everyday occurrence.[45] Louis-François Le Jeune witnessed the battle of Marengo in northern Italy in 1800 and sketched on the battlefield.[46] Vereshchagin did the same. The young Vasiliy Nemirovich-Danchenko, a war correspondent in the Russo–Turkish war of 1877–8, records his behaviour under fire:

> The famous artist Vasiliy Vereshchagin also followed our unit. He often had to look death in the face, and you didn't know which was the greater, his talent or his courage . . . Under the fiercest fire he would calmly and methodically sit down on his folding stool and do his sketches as if he were in his studio.[47]

However, in the context of European pacifism, the artist's personal presence on the battlefield was acquiring a new significance at this time: as an eyewitness of battle, of actual events, he had the full moral right to tell people 'the truth'. It was for this reason that Vereshchagin portrayed himself in *Shipka-Sheynovo* among General Skobelev's staff-officers, and always wore the St George Cross,



199 A letter written by Vereshchagin to Pavel Tretyakov.

awarded for his participation in the defence of the Samarkand Fortress in 1868 (after this he refused all awards and decorations). What was important to him was the symbol indicating that he was a witness of war, on which he focused his full attention. It was not coincidental that in a letter to Pavel Tretyakov (1832–1898), Vereshchagin suggested having the standard that Skobelev had given him, depicted in the painting, placed behind his canvas (illus. 199). Like the St George Cross he wore on his uniform, this standard was no triumphal symbol but a memorial token appealing to the viewer to trust the authenticity of the artist's pictorial reportage, the thrust of which was that the compositional frame of corpses in his picture was itself the terrible, nightmare price of victory.

In other words, once the frame of a person's picture of the world is changed, the frames of his visual images change too. The age of Positivism and the philosophy of Auguste Comte decisively cancelled out the multi-layered Christian cosmos. Heaven and hell were found to be on earth. And the artist's eye was caught by the changed and the dead, by the human body without any higher significance – the corpse, embodiment of 'the objective fact' and 'the truth' of war. The theme of human death had long since entered the rhetoric of art within an established system of Christian values. The death of a saint and the death of a sinner were opposite poles of this system. But seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pathological anatomy took the human corpse out of the forbidden area in which it was considered sinful to mutilate or even depict it, and in European Romantic painting we encounter that obsession with death that led Théodore Géricault to become a frequenter of morgues and places of public executions. Like Vereshchagin, he strove for realism in his depiction of dead bodies in his painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19; Louvre, Paris), but whereas he could find death beautiful and appealing, to Vereshchagin it was terrible and repulsive.

Much influenced by European Romanticism, then, in his depiction of extreme scenes, Vereshchagin developed his own pantheistic ideas and positivist methods. This led him to make systematic collections of military and ethnographic material and also to experiment with framing in the observation and classification of data. His frames were designed to convince the viewer that the nightmare world of his 'battle pictures without heroes' came in fact from the empirical world, and that it was this that shaped his depictions. Here, however, the

problem of the raw emotional level of mass audiences arose for the first time; a hundred years later and more it remains exactly the same when it comes to television transmissions from theatres of war: the 'realities' of war and killing are still one of the key topics for activating viewers' responses. Vereshchagin's exhibitions of his battle paintings, therefore, with their intense ideological focus, are clear precursors of the anti-heroic war films of the twentieth century. Here we find a precisely planned approach to capturing the mass mind and exposing it to powerful and terrible images, making use of not only the empirical aesthetic but often shock, primal emotion and scandal as well. The power of uncontrollable emotions sometimes made sensational emergence at Vereshchagin's exhibitions.

Attendance figures at Vereshchagin's exhibitions begin to tell the story. The 1880 exhibition in St Petersburg drew 200,000 visitors in 40 days, buying tens of thousands of catalogues. There were about 100,000 visitors in 26 days to the 1881 exhibition in Vienna, with 31,670 catalogues sold. Attendance figures in Hamburg were 42,000 in 37 days; 35,000 in 36 days in Dresden, 28,000 in 21 days in Brussels, and 57,000 in 40 days in Budapest.[48] These figures, impressive for their time, are amplified by the testimony of a number of eyewitnesses who were not visitors. Alexander Vereshchagin, the artist's younger brother who helped in the organization of the exhibitions, thus describes the attendance at the Vienna exhibition of 1881:

> There were still 10 minutes to go before opening time, but the public was desperate to get into the Künstlerhaus. Those in front, pressed on by those behind, pushed on the doors. Glass, not withstanding the pressure, flew about in splinters. Heads, sticks, umbrellas thrust through windows broken open; shouts, entreaties, curses were heard – uproar. Something unheard-of was happening; I saw that the crowd consisted of the so-called decent classes – ladies in fine dress, men in top-hats . . . As soon as the doors were opened, a crowd poured in such as I have never seen since.[49]

Alexander Benua (1870–1960) too gives an emotionally charged account of Vereshchagin's exhibitions in his memoirs:

> Those exhibitions, mounted in rooms without natural light, hung with exotic objects from foreign lands and decorated with tropical plants, made a terrible, inexorable impact. Those gigantic, bright or dark canvases, across which Hindus strode in fairytale dress, or unfortunate soldiers struggled through mountains in deep snow, or a priest in a black chasuble read prayers for the dead under a leaden sky over a field full of naked and decapitated corpses – those canvases had the effect of the ghastly nightmares of fever.[50]

Pavel Tretyakov's elder daughter, Vera Ziloti, also has her memories:

> On a black background, in electric light, these paintings, alive as life itself, hit us, touched us, terrified us, overwhelmed us; I remember how a mutilated sentry looked at us in dumb torment, while from somewhere behind the pictures came the strains of a harmonium, quiet, melodious, plaintive . . . I wept and hid in a dark corner of the room.[51]

The emergence of all this powerfully emotive subject matter was a consequence of the 'war of the painters' at this time on the art market, in which the magnetic draw of 'horror' was a major element of publicity. Ilya Repin explained how he had been caught up in this:

> At that time every exhibition in Europe showed bloody pictures in great quantity, and so I, no doubt infected by this taste for blood, went home and immediately started painting a scene of blood – *Ivan the Terrible with his Son*. And this bloody picture had great success.[52]

Works like these were certainly calculated to cause mass excitement and shock the viewer; an atmosphere of social scandal gathered around them, due as much to illicit behaviour on the part of the public as to official prohibitions. The former could be manifested in material damage done to canvases. *Ivan the Terrible with his Son Ivan,* 16 *November* 1581 (*Ivan Groznyy i syn yego Ivan* 16 *noyabrya* 1581 *goda*, 1885; Tretyakov Gallery) was at first banned from public exhibition, and when it was in due course exhibited at the Tretyakov it was slashed by a mentally ill former icon painter, Balashov, which in its turn caused the suicide of the curator of the gallery, the artist Khrustalev, when in a state of severe emotional shock. According to the memoirs of another of the gallery's curators, both before the October Revolution and in Soviet times the public was drawn to this painting more than to any other.[53] A similar incident occurred at Vereshchagin's exhibition in Vienna in 1886: a visitor poured acid over his painting *The Holy Family* (*Svyatoye semeystvo*, 1884–5) and broke several frames.[54]

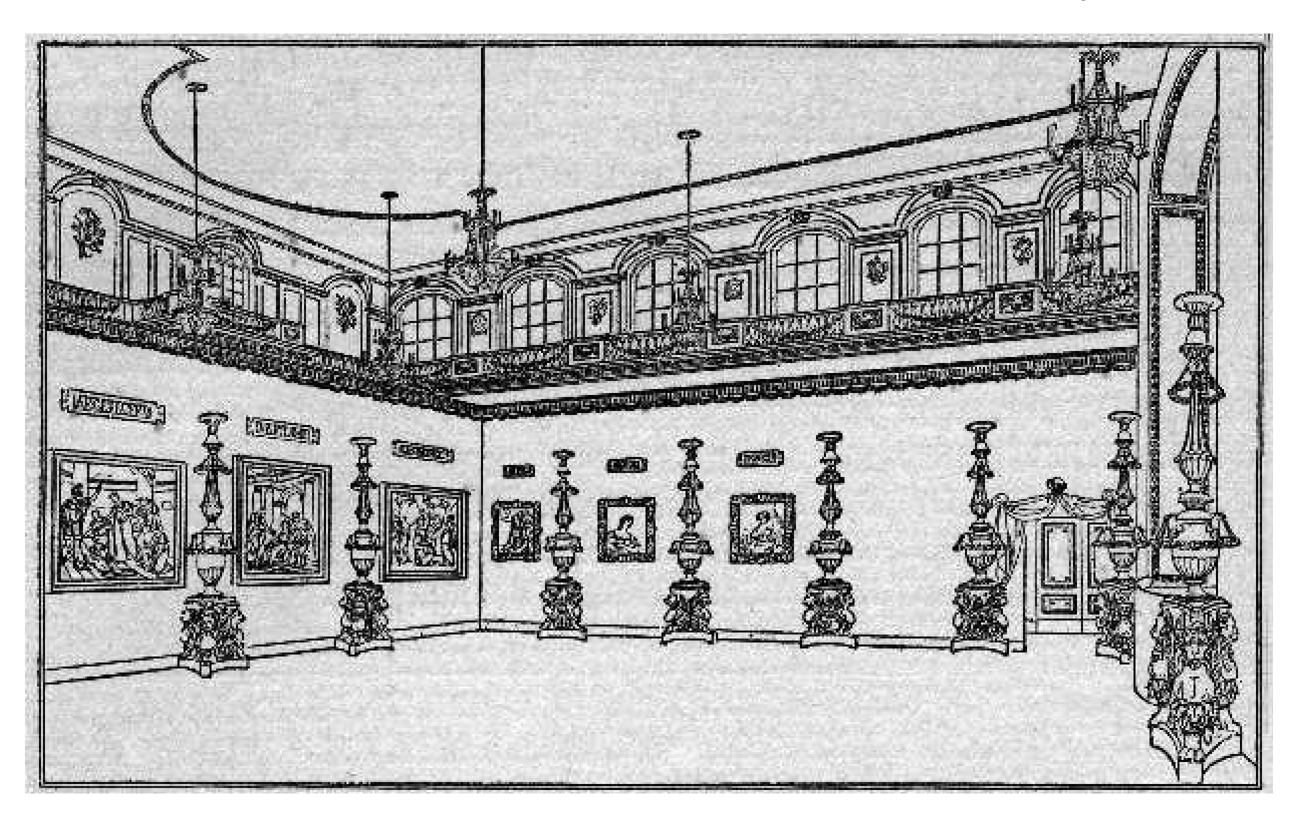
The originality of Vereshchagin's framing and exhibitions sprang not only from photography, photoreportage and promotional techniques, but also from the impact of the panorama, which had recently come into fashion, producing a spectacular effect by means of an illusionistic frame drawing the very boundary between the imaginary world of art and the real world that included the viewer. It was from the panorama, as well as the theatre and photostudio, that Vereshchagin's use of objects, lighting and music in his exhibitions came. The palette, composition and format of his paintings would also seem to have been influenced by the panorama, which sought to overcome the fragmentation of the world – the picture-window as cut out from the surrounding world of reality, with its optics governed by linear perspective and the camera obscura. The picture created in the first all-round panorama, constructed in Edinburgh in 1787, already appeared to surround the viewer just as the visible world did, and its effects were developed still further in the next century through techniques brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

For example, the illusionistic effect of the juxtaposition of real with depicted objects in the panorama was heightened by experiments with light. A leading part in this was played by the inventor of photography, Louis Daguerre. The diorama constructed in Paris in 1822 by Daguerre and Bouton gave more complex effects of light through the use of mirrors. The pavilion containing the diorama was built in such a way that the viewer, walking round from place to place, did not see the edges of the picture because the frame was made up of the real-life objects surrounding him or her. The diorama had a straight horizon and showed a landscape painted in fluid colours on both sides of

a thin canvas. Changes in the intensity of light from daylight to darkness were mechanically caused by means of mirrors and coloured glass in the roof of the pavilion. The picture was backlit, which dematerialized its surface and produced colour changes giving the illusion of progression from day to night in the landscape spread out before the viewer's eyes as if it were a scene from real life.

The diorama had an overwhelming public success when first seen in Russia in 1851. The Palermo Panorama made by Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) was brought to St Petersburg by G. Gropius from Berlin.[55] Visitors mounted to the upper floor of the round pavilion, from which vantage-point they surveyed an 'Italian view'. The same pavilion also appeared to be inside a monastery. With a change in the light setting, evening fell and the monastery bell summoned visitors to evening prayer. At a later date, battle panoramas came into fashion in Europe including Russia, to which famous battle painters of the time, such as Michael Diemer, Louis Braun, Luděk Marold, Václav Jansa and Wojciech Kossak, contributed their work.[56]

Vereshchagin's exhibitions may be considered as a synthesis of all the achievements of European visual culture, including public spectacles, as they evolved in Russia, especially the popular genre of the 'living picture', which not only aspired to merge theatre and painting, but also gave the picture frame supplementary functions. Thus in 1822 Empress Mariya Fyodorovna put on a show of living pictures in the White Room of the Hermitage in honour of



200 Eugenie Pluchart, *White Room of the Hermitage, with an Exhibition of 'Living Pictures'*, 1822.

her daughter, the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar; these were representations of famous paintings in the Hermitage, and were enjoyed as 'artistic entertainments', of which we have a record in Eugenie Pluchart's drawings of the same year (illus. 200). Windows cut into the walls of the room connected two areas, one for the actors and one for the spectators. From the spectators' viewpoint the spaces inside picture frames appeared to be canvases with living actors taking the place of depicted figures; and it was the frames that facilitated identification of the poses of motionless actors as those of the postures and forms of the subjects of familiar paintings rather than sculptured images. Furthermore, the shining gilt of the frames reflected light, which fell on made-up faces and folds of clothing, enhancing the illusion of painted surfaces. 'The concept of these entertainments is interesting', observed the journal *Staryye gody*:

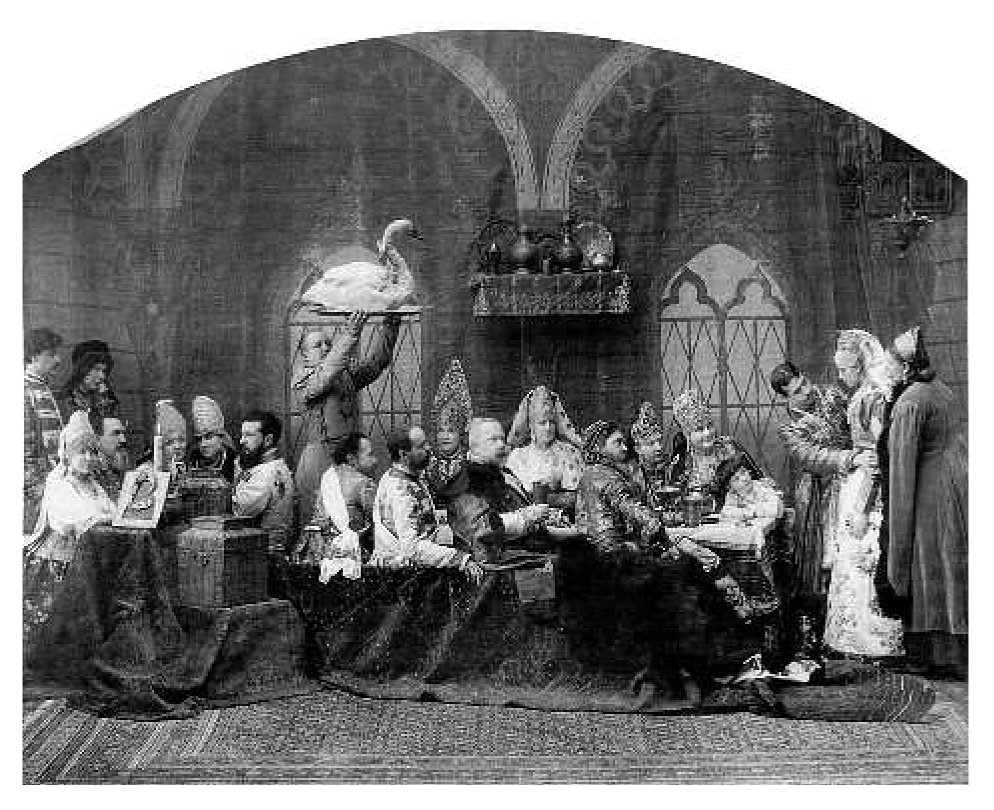
> it has been used before in illusory representations of museum rooms with rows of pictures appearing to hang on the walls but in reality with groups of living persons posing inside the frames.[57]

Living pictures were also shown at this time on the stage. In December 1821, not long before the empress's show in the Hermitage, a one-act play *Living Pictures, or Ours Bad, Other People's Good*, was put on in St Petersburg.[58] The theatre critic A. N. Bazhenov, writing of a performance of living pictures at the Maly Theatre in the 1860s (*Dreams of Love by the Niagara Falls* and *A Dream*), noted that stage sets were placed 'at varying removes' to give the illusion of receding through space, and that actors combined with depicted figures and objects, a 'cardboard cupid', for example, appearing beside a 'living nymph' and a 'live Macbeth' riding a depicted horse. In Bazhenov's opinion, living pictures could not satisfy the demanding viewer:

> There are many reasons for this. First of all, these pictures cannot be called 'living', only partly living, because only the figures are alive; everything else is more than dead. This deadness of setting, sharply clashing with the living relief of the figures, gives the liveness itself an unnatural, false effect and takes it beyond the bounds of good taste.[59]

In the second half of the nineteenth century living pictures were shown in urban and country houses, and were a popular item in the repertoire of the private theatre at Abramtsevo.[60] Audiences for such private showings, however, were limited. What made the genre accessible to mass audiences was photography, used in the creation of dramatized scenes and perceived as a medium 'closer to reality' than the paintings on canvas that it imitated. A typical example of this development was Mikhail Panov's photograph *Boyar Wedding Feast* (illus. 201), an imitation of Konstantin Makovsky's painting of the same title (1883, illus. 202). Using the techniques of posed photography, Panov 'produced' Makovsky's painting, dressing and placing the actors as they appeared in the painting. His photograph shows an artistic staging of a living picture, which was first shown, it is to be noted, by Makovsky, and proved so popular that it went on to be presented to Emperor Alexander III in the house of Princess A. N. Naryshkina.[61]

At length, photography and the cinematograph introduced movement to the living picture, making its framing more complex and bringing the genre





201 Mikhail Panov, *Boyar Wedding Feast ('living picture')*, 1883–4. photograph.

202 Konstantin Makovsky, *Boyar Wedding Feast*, 1883. Hillwood Museum, Washington, DC.

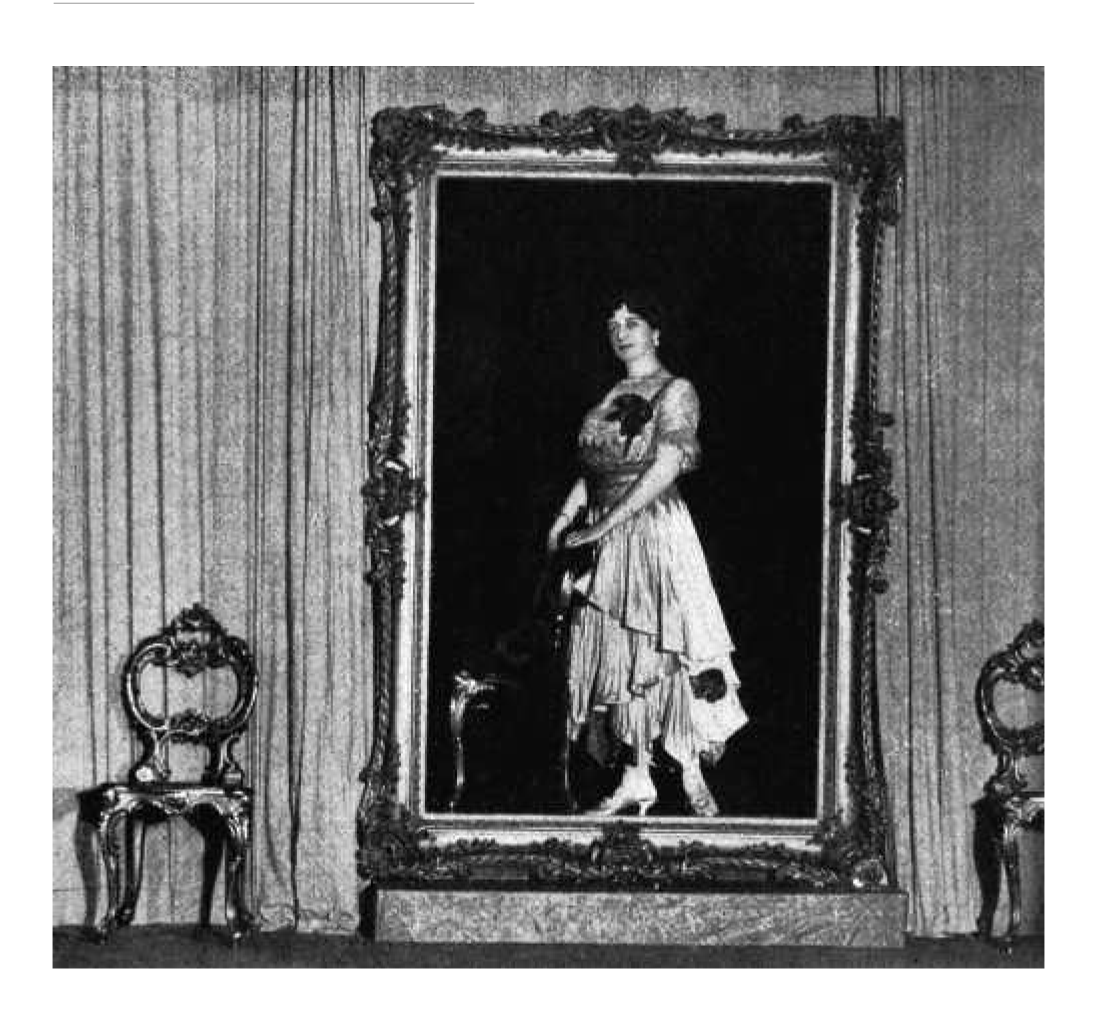




near to the stage of film. Two photographs published in the journal *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (*Capital and Country*) in 1916 exemplify this. They show a framed portrait entitled *Vision of the Past* coming to life (illus. 203, 204). This living picture, bringing a ballerina of the past to life to join hands with a celebrated male dancer of the day, was shown at a charity evening at the house of one O. K. Karabchevskaya.[62] The model stepping out of the picture frame demonstrated the continuity of the imaginary and the real worlds. The picture frame tended simultaneously towards presence and absence, inasmuch as it was superimposed on the edge of the film shot. The latter froze the moment, making it stand still before the eye, but the dynamic pose of the figure coming out of the picture frame disturbed the immobility of the film shot, shifting it and setting it in motion. Consequently, the figure not only came out of the picture, but also passed beyond the edge of the film shot, merging the montage of real-life 'images' with the moving panorama of cinematography. Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970), who was to make many discoveries in cinematic montage, advised the viewer to train his or her eyes to look round and over an imaginary window cut into the paper in the same proportion as the photo shot that replaced the picture frame:

> Imagine the picture frame, with its proportions of 3:4. If we take the picture out of its frame and look over the frame at the real world around it, what we shall see inside the frame is the photographic picture shot.[63]

With the advent of the moving panorama at the end of the nineteenth century, creation of the



illusion of the real world seemed to be approaching the limits of possibility. The image alone passed before the viewer's eyes, with concealed compositional framing. In Vereshchagin's series of paintings the frame separated images as it did in series of photographs. But with moving images, it tended towards invisibility; the succession of separate pictures began to be perceived as a single visible world. Thus viewers of the moving Trans-Siberian Railway Panorama installed during the Paris Exposition of 1900 were accommodated in three luxurious carriages, through the windows of which they could gaze as the countryside passed by, with the illusion that the train was moving. At the same exhibition a moving 'mareorama' was also shown. In the middle of the hall of grand attractions was a platform 70 metres in length simulating the deck of a transatlantic liner and admitting 700 viewers who were able to see some of the spectacular landscapes to be found between Marseille and Yokohama by way of Naples, the Suez Canal, Sri Lanka, Singapore and China. These were painted on huge canvases wound round cylinders placed along both sides of the platform, which were set in motion by special machinery. Each canvas was 750 metres in length and 15 metres

203–204 *Vision of the Past ('living picture')*, 1916.



in height. Some 20,000 square metres of painting in all rolled before the viewers' eyes, creating the illusion of a ship in motion with exotic coastal views being passed.[64]

In this context it was natural for cinematography to be defined, on its invention in 1894, as 'the telling of stories by moving pictures'.[65] The spectator did not see the division of moving film into individual frames that was at the heart of the technological revolution ushered in by the cinematograph in the field of visual images, which has been further developed in our own time by computer technology. The frame separating the world of external reality from the symbolic world of the imagination disappeared into the black edges of the screen. The visible, moving world of cinematography acquired, as it were, its own natural boundaries, in the same way, for example, as our eye looking through a window perceives the real world, undivided and in motion, within the limits imposed by the window aperture.

Like Western European artists such as Delacroix, Courbet, Bonnard, Eakins, Mucha, Knopf, Munch and Degas[66] (who based a number of landscapes on his own photographs),[67] many Russian painters made use of photography, among them – besides Vereshchagin – Kramskoy, Levitan, Vrubel and



Kandinsky. Isaac Levitan (1860–1900), for example, is known to have drawn on photography in achieving *chiaroscuro* effects in his painting *March* (*Mart*, 1895; Tretyakov Gallery).[68] Vrubel experimented with the palette for his painting *The Demon Overthown* (*Demon poverzhennyy*, 1901; Tretyakov Gallery) by colouring a faint photoprint, changing not only the composition in the process but also the relationship between the colour of the frame and the overall palette of his painting (illus. 205). Furthermore, photography also helped in the painting of the mountains in this picture. Vrubel's close friend V. V. von Meck recalls:

> 'Help me and get hold of some photos of mountains as soon as you can,' Vrubel' wrote to me in a note he sent me one evening. It was almost night when I found some photographs of Elbrus and Kazbek at a friend's and sent them to him. That very night, behind the figure of the Demon, pearl-like peaks sprang up, touched by the eternal coldness of death.[69]

The painting as photographic exposure could also be manifested in portraits and hand-coloured photoprints. Ivan Kramskoy, Repin and many other artists painted portraits from photographs. The earliest such works are Kramskoy's monochrome portraits of the early 1870s,[70] some of which even vie with photography in the characteristics of their palette and in their pale borders reminiscent of mounts of photographs: the white border around the portrait of the artist Fyodor Vasil'yev (illus. 206), for example, makes the picture resemble a photograph, while the frame convinces the viewer that this is not a photograph but a painted picture.

Finally, in the hand-coloured photoprint the photographic border in turn 'disappears' from the viewer's sight: a 'fold of reality' (Deleuze) alters the photograph beyond recognition – as in the 'photo-pictures' in the album *Nizhniy-Novgorod* presented to Alexander II by the artist-photographer Andrey Karelin, who was close to the emperor; his photographs were hand-coloured by Ivan Shishkin (1832–1998), and the work of the celebrated land-

205 Mikhail Vrubel, *The Demon Overthrown*, 1901, coloured photograph. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

scape painter made them look like original paintings. Karelin himself commented: 'I couldn't believe that the watercolours were done on photographs: not a trace of the faint print on Whatman paper was visible on any of them.'[71]



The same effect could be produced in the process of reproduction of original paintings. This, for example, was the technique that lay behind the reproduction of a painting taken as an 'exact copy' in the second half of the nineteenth century. First, the artist would give permission for his painting to be photographed and a monochrome photoprint would be made, on which he might or might not carry out corrections. Repin recalled how the Russian artist Nikolay Ge, with 'a few strokes of his brush', rescued a 'hopeless' photoprint of his painting *The Last Supper* made for phototype reproduction. It was this photoprint that was reproduced directly and then retouched. As a result of all these amendments of 'reality', a painting might become unrecognizable. It was this kind of reproduction of his painting *The Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks to the Sultan of Turkey* (1880–91; Russian Museum, St Petersburg) that Repin saw in the studio of a Ukrainian artist visiting Munich.[72] If an artist's use of photography in work on a painting, then, brought it nearer to reality, it was never by very much. At each stage of its preparation the framing of a painting-as-photographic-exposure built up an alternative 'reality' that was taken as the original work. What we see today in old photographs and other reproductions of paintings, therefore, does not show the reality but rather a certain set of conceptions of that reality. In this sense, old photographs and other kinds of reproduction are very important sources in the study of cultural value systems.

206 Ivan Kramskoy, *The Artist Fyodor Vasil'yev*, early 1870s. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Artist, Frame-maker and Client

With the Industrial Revolution and the coming of mass production and consumption, fundamental changes to visual images and their frames occurred. In the 1830s and '40s the elaborate picture frames of previous centuries gave way to industrially produced mouldings of various types and forms, from massive and complex oil painting frames to simplified ones for cheap popular lithographs and phototypes. At a time of commercialization of art and new market conditions, the picture frame became a symbol of the work of art as a saleable article. It is true that the frame had played this role in earlier times too: an expensive gilt frame had always been a luxury object, an indication of the prosperous collector. Paintings in gilt frames were advertised for sale in newspapers in the eighteenth century. In 1779 the 'public safekeeping office' (pawnshop) in the Imperial Hospital for Foundlings, for example, was selling off 'various paintings by masters in gilded frames'.[73] The difference, however, was that now the art market was increasingly counting on mass consumption. In Gogol's story 'The Portrait', therefore, middle-of-the-road St Petersburg antique dealers display a quantity of cheap pictures 'in tawdry yellow frames'. 'Here's "Winter"! Take "Winter". The frame alone costs something!' says the dealer as he tries to tempt the hero of the tale, the artist Chertkov, making his pitch wholly in the spirit of the time, when a tawdry gilded frame was becoming a symbol of luxury in the eyes of a mass public.[74]

The fact is that demand for expensive carved frames declined sharply in conditions of the mass production of visual images. It has been calculated that by 1813 the number of wood-carvers in Europe had already declined by 90 per cent since the last years of the previous century,[75] so that the status of the frame-carver declined correspondingly. The names of the most famous European frame-makers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries have been preserved: the Dutchmen Adam van Vianen (1569–1627) and Johannes Lutma the Elder (1584–1669), the French masters Jean-Baptiste Pineau (1652–94), Edmé Chollot, Jean Chéren and Etienne-Louis Infroit.[76] Further foreign masters were active in Russia too in the eighteenth century and taught applied arts to Academy students in St Petersburg – Nicolas-François Gillet, Louis Rolland, Simon Sorensen, Bernhardt Friedrich Backoven, among a number of others.[77] Rolland, chief wood-carver at the State Office for Building, worked for twenty years under the direction of Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli carving large-scale ornamental ensembles for the interiors of the Winter Palace, and from 1766 to 1769 also gave a class on ornamental sculpture at the Academy of Arts. During the next century, in contrast, the frame-maker was transformed from a specialist in ornamental sculpture into an anonymous and unremarkable craftsman, although an artist turning to this trade could still become rich and famous. The explanation for this lay in the particular cultural-historical position between industry and art in which the picture frame had been placed in the era of the Industrial Revolution, involving a changed relationship between the artist, the frame-maker and the client. On the one hand, the picture frame had a distinct role to play in the open art market and artists' exhibitions, and on the other, it now actively encroached upon individual artistic creation.

Paintings and photographs of artists' studios of the second half of the nineteenth century show many empty picture frames, some better than

others, but all of them needed to show and present a picture to a customer. 'Not being entirely sure', the artist Pavel Kovalevsky wrote to Pavel Tretyakov on 28 February 1886,

> that you received my letter in which I gave my agreement to placing my painting 'The Metro - politan' in your gallery, I am writing to you on another point. I agree to change the frame, if you agree to let me have 2,000 roubles for this [painting].[78]

It is evident, then, that the frame plays an important role in the mutual relationship between artist and client in the presentation of an artist's work. And the same may be gathered from the numerous nine-teenth-century images showing an artist 'painting' his work already framed or posing beside it.

A photograph of Vereshchagin working on his painting *Napoleon I on the Heights of Borodino* (*Napoleon I na Borodinskikh vysotakh*, 1897; Historical Museum, Moscow) is a case in point (illus. 207). Here, in a tradition going back at least to the



207 Vasiliy Vereshchagin at work on *Napoleon I on the Heights of Borodino* in his studio beyond the Serpukhovskaya Zastava, Moscow, *c.* 1900.



208 Ivan Ayvazovsky portrayed in his studio in a framed photograph, 1880s.

seventeenth century in European painting, the frame is indicative of the value of the painting. At a time when the art market was being actively developed, the commercial function of the picture frame became yet more marked, and sometimes paramount – as in the photographic portraits of the famous Russian artist Ivan Ayvazovsky (1817–1900) that effectively framed small souvenir landscapes, as popular and attractive as this celebrated painter's exhibitions of his original work (illus. 208).

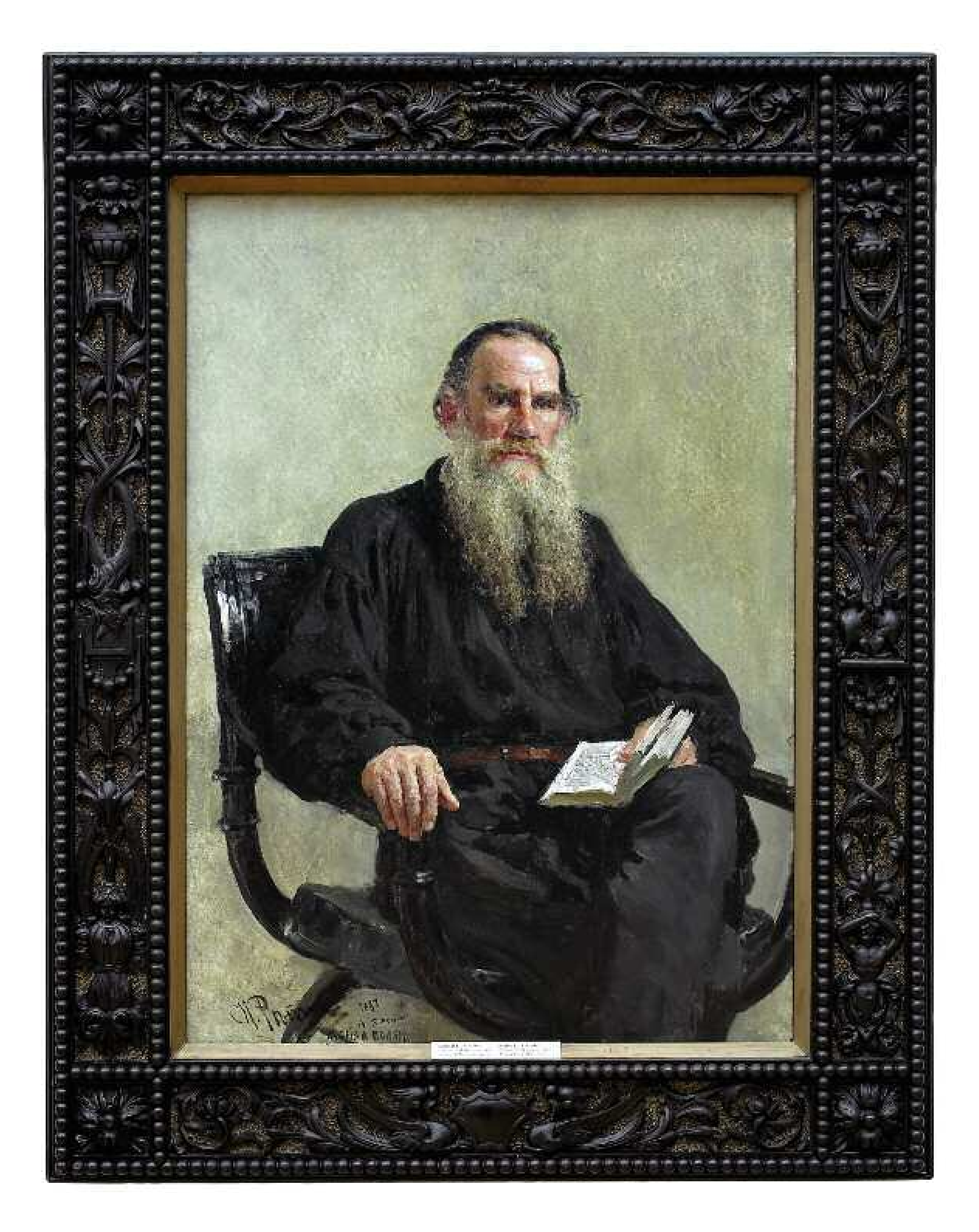
In a photograph of 1887 Ayvazovsky sits on a chair, looking as if he has just put the finishing touches to the seascape contained in its massive frame. The oil painting on cardboard and its frame are set within a further framing provided by the studio photograph, which convinces the viewer that the painting is by the hand of the famous artist. Facing the viewer in three-quarter pose, he seems to invite us to appraise the merits of his work, which, according to the rhetoric of the framing, is inseparable from his personal image. The portrait of Ayvazovsky is supposed to be as instantly recognizable as the painting itself. The outer wooden frame round the whole and the artist's dedicatory inscription convince the viewer that the famous painter sits before our eye having just set his dedicatory inscription to the original of an important work of art. It is perfectly possible that this was in fact what happened. However, documents and reminiscences of contemporaries testify to Ayvazovsky's method of making his souvenir landscapes, in which he was helped by others, among them the painter Kirill Lemokh (1841–1910), one of the Wanderers. 'Next door to Ayvazovsky's studio,' the landscape painter Jakov Minchenkov, one of the organizers of the Wanderers' exhibitions, recalls,

> there was a room where Lemokh worked with friends; they would cover a sheet of Whatman paper with diluted India ink or sepia with a sponge. Patches of indistinct outlines would show on the paper. Then Ayvazovsky would cut the sheet into smaller pieces, touch up the patches, and there would be seascapes with clouds and waves. He would present one of these, *framed*, to every important person who visited his studio [my emphasis].[79]

Thus, besides its usual function of presenting a picture, the frame could be associated with the problem of faking and attribution.

Pavel Tretyakov, who devoted careful attention to the frames of the pictures in his collection, is a typical collector as regards the mutual relationship between artist, frame-maker and client. He would ask an artist to replace or overpaint a frame. Ilya Repin, for example, repainted the frame of his portrait of Lev Tolstoy black at this collector's request (illus. 209). The resulting austere-looking frame containing Renaissance ornamental elements clearly placed the great Russian writer on a level with the geniuses of the Renaissance. Testimony survives from contemporaries that Repin gave little thought to the frames for his paintings. Minchenkov recalls:

> Repin's frames were very often in contradiction to his paintings. Serious subject matter and austere forms – and a light-hearted frame that didn't go with the picture at all. Friends would point this out to him. Ilya Yefimovich would seem to agree: 'You're right. I don't seem to have any luck with my frames.' But he didn't change them and next time they would be even worse.



209 Ilya Repin, *Lev Tolstoy*, 1887. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Minchenkov also comments that Isaac Levitan preferred 'narrow frames' that corresponded to the moods and 'melodies' of his pictures.[80] With an eye on how his work was perceived, an artist might not only change the colour of a frame but also make changes to the picture itself or even to the surrounding exhibition space. After Vasiliy Surikov's painting *Stepan Razin* (1906; Russian Museum, St Petersburg) had been hung in the Historical Museum in Moscow, for example, the artist not only repainted the frame several times but even sought permission to repaint the walls of the room; furthermore, he made changes to the painting itself in order to achieve harmony between it and the surrounding wall space.[81]

In contrast to Repin's reputation in the matter of frames, Tretyakov used the services of experienced specialists, as is evident in the expertly chosen frames of the pictures in his collection. In the courtyard of his house in Lavrushinsky Street in Moscow he even built a workshop for making mouldings.[82] Vereshchagin's correspondence with Tretyakov contains interesting discussion of frames in the planning of various kinds of exhibitions. Tretyakov, as we have seen, was the artist's principal client and collector. He acquired the greater part of the Turkestan series and some separate paintings from the Balkan. In one of his earliest letters to Tretyakov, dated 10 April 1875, Vereshchagin asks for the paintings acquired by the collector 'not to be shown in any exhibition unframed or out of series'.[83] In the same year he asked for a whole series to be sent to America 'framed, without fail',[84] and in 1887 he wrote:

> Dear Pavel Mikhaylovich,
> I asked you for *Before the Attack* [*Pered atakoyu*] for London, and you promised me . . . if I may now ask you for a second picture as well, i.e. *Plevna*, would you be so kind as to send it, if possible, in a frame, which can be altered or entirely remade if it is damaged.[85]

The documentary evidence indicates that Tretyakov would send Vereshchagin's paintings to exhibitions abroad sometimes framed and sometimes unframed. When the artist insisted, however, that a painting should be sent 'in its own' (i.e. the original) frame, the collector agreed, although the freight cost was much increased. 'I sent *Plevna* framed, as you wished', Tretyakov wrote to Vereshchagin on 14 July 1887,

> but you'll see what a difference it makes – a large painting [unframed] weighs 4 poods 24 pounds [*c.* 75 kg or one and a half hundredweight], and a small one framed, 14 poods 12 pounds [*c.* 234 kg or approaching five hundredweight]. I sent *Before the Attack* without a stretcher, to reduce the size of the box as much as possible, so you will need to have a new stretcher made, as I'll return the painting without one; I've found that this is more practical, only you should have the canvas stretched more carefully – it has been overstretched several times. In stretching, as little of the canvas as possible should be held, because in its frame, which I am keeping, the whole of the picture surface is exposed just as it is, neither the frame nor the fillet covers it. Once more, I most humbly ask you not to do any changes to the picture.[86]

Frames would often get broken in transit, and so canvases being sent for exhibition would often be

rolled up. Paintings with massive frames would be transported in special boxes, as was the case with *Shipka-Sheynovo*.[87]

The boxes in which the paintings of the Wanderers were transported about Russia, designed by Ivan Shishkin, when opened served as easels for picture display at exhibitions.[88] Sometimes Shishkin would also jot down a general display plan of his paintings (illus. 210). Vereshchagin's son has described the transportation of his father's paintings on travelling exhibitions:

> The paintings, numbering up to 150 or even 180, in massive wooden frames with gilded plaster mouldings, were carefully packed into stout boxes in the same way as the rest of the exhibition inventory. To give an idea of the quantity and weight of the total load – in the transportation of the exhibition from Paris to St Petersburg in January 1880, the boxes of paintings alone occupied four entire railway platforms.[89]



210 Ivan Shishkin, detail of the hanging scheme for an exhibition of pictures at the Academy of Arts, 1891. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

This testimony indicates the thoroughness with which Vereshchagin planned the logistics of his travelling exhibitions, which was on a scale almost comparable to that of a large theatre.

The preparation of exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century involved the artist not only with collectors but also, in a major way, with frame-makers. Vereshchagin is a prime example of this. He carefully considered the form and design of his picture frames, and ordered them specially for each of his series of paintings; they turned out to be an important element in his exhibitions. Most of his frames were acquired from abroad, especially from Munich or Paris, where he had lived in the 1870s and '80s while working on the Turkestan, Indian and Balkan series; at this time he was a regular customer of L. Louty's on rue Vanneau. Surviving letters and records of accounts show that he spent huge sums on frames (illus. 211, 212); for one exhibition in 1883 he ordered frames to the value of 2,500 roubles in gold.[90] Documents also show that in 1886 he commissioned the frame-maker Stal to repair the frame of the painting *All Quiet on the Shipka*,[91] and on another occasion a representative of this workshop travelled to Frankfurt am Main to repair the frame of *Shipka-Sheynovo*.[92] After his return to Russia in 1891, Vereshchagin worked in Moscow on a series of paintings on the year 1812, using mostly Russian

framers, of whom there were considerable numbers during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. The leading framers in Moscow included V. Chekato, A. Beggrov, A. Grab'ye, I. Datsiaro and B. Avantso; and in St Petersburg, N. Vasil'yev, E. Dezler, A. Zhesel', N. Freydberg, K. Frankovsky, S. Abrosimov and a number of others (illus. 213). All these were comparatively large enterprises employing a number of specialists and making a variety of frames, for graphic work and photographs as well as paintings. They also restored and sold antique frames, for example Grab'ye, 'frame specialists in fine art and iconostases'.[93] Avantso, in turn, advertised a 'huge range of ready-made leather, bronze and wooden frames' and also mouldings from foreign and Russian suppliers, 'all with a wide variety of choice'.[94] Vasiliy Polenov bought frames from Grab'ye, and one letter of his asks a friend 'to get Grab'ye to hurry with the frames' for his paintings *Winter* (*Zima*) and *Felling* (*Rubka lesa*) and to send them to St Petersburg to Repin's address.[95] In 1902 Viktor Vasnetsov ordered a frame of his own design from Grab'ye specially for display at the Emperor Alexander III Museum in St Petersburg.[96]

A number of Russian artists of the second half of the nineteenth century, including Vereshchagin, ordered frames from Beggrov & Fel'ten, many of which may still be seen in the Tretyakov Collection. The Tretyakov Gallery has archival evidence that Vereshchagin also ordered carved frames from Rostov Velikiy.[97] Evidently, he needed frames made

211 Invoice to Vasiliy Vereshchagin for making frames, from the Louty workshop in France, *c.* 1870–80.

212 Invoice to Vereshchagin from the A. P. Petrov workshop, 1898.



by Russian craftsmen for the paintings and studies resulting from his visits to Yaroslavl, Rostov Velikiy, Kostroma and Makar'yev in 1887–8; the carved ornamentation of these frames imitated that of Russian iconostases and icon cases, arousing the viewer's empathy with his depictions. A typical example is the frame for his painting *Iconostasis of the Church of St John the Divine on the Ishna near Rostov the Great* (*Ikonostas tserkvi Ioanna Bogoslova na Ishne bliz Rostova Yaroslavskogo*, late 1880s–90s; Russian Museum, St Petersburg, illus. 214). We have already seen how this seventeenth-century iconostasis inspired Polenov in his creation of the interior of the church at Abramtsevo (illus. 59). To be noted here is that Vereshchagin's frame testified not only to the popularity of this iconostasis with Russian artists but, further, also to a new attitude among the latter to the framing of their work, their desire to link picture and frame in accordance with current ideas about the subject matter depicted. This is apparent in a number of frames in the 'Russian style', which was seen as appropriate for paintings depicting scenes from Russian history, portraits in national dress or scenes from national life. Typical in this regard is Vyacheslav Shvarts's *Spring Ride on the Empress's Pilgrimage during the Reign of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich* (*Veshnyy poyezd tsaritsy na bogomol'ye pri tsare Alekseye Mikhayloviche*, 1868; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, illus. 215), the wooden frame of which not only bears appropriate ornamentation but also reveals more complex aspects of a painterly approach that was based on architectural and historical theories of its time. According to these, architectural ornament on the exterior of a building should correlate with its interior. Hence the ornamentation of a picture frame was often conceived as a background to the content of the picture. The unified patriarchal structure of the Russian state, the distinctiveness of Russian vernacular wooden architecture, the closeness of the life of the tsar to the life of the people – the subjects about which the historian Ivan Zabelin wrote – all this

213 Advertisement from the frame-making company A. Zhesel', St Petersburg, early 20th century.



214 Vasiliy Vereshchagin, *Iconostasis of the Church of St John the Divine on the Ishna near Rostov the Great*, late 1880s–90s. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg.



was to be brought out in the carved ornament of the wooden frame. And if Lev Dal' supposed that 'nationality' was to be found 'only in the daily life and activity of the people or in pre-Petrine Russian art', Vladimir Stasov in turn stressed that 'the chief creative strength in connection with our art' lay in wooden architecture and its ornamentation.[98] Innumerable wooden picture frames in the 'Russian' style made in the second half of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth therefore gave emphasis to the Slavophile ideas that continued to inform Russian art.

Vereshchagin was not alone among Russian painters of his time in sometimes conceiving of a frame even at a preparatory stage of work on a painting. Fyodor Vasil'yev's drawing *Landscape with Old Mill, Yalta* (*Peyzazh so staroy mel'nitsey v Yalte*, 1872; Tretyakov Gallery) presents the future painting within a wholly defined frame. This sketch may have had a testimonial purpose, and may portray a painting in the Tretyakov Collection (illus. 216, 217). The same thing occurs with the drawings of Vasiliy Perov (1833–1882) and a number of other Russian artists who planned a particular type of frame while still working on a portrait, landscape



215 Vyacheslav Shvarts, *Spring Ride on the Empress's Pilgrimage during the Reign of Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich*, 1868. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

216 Fyodor Vasil'yev, *Landscape with Old Mill, Yalta*, 1872, drawing. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



or genre scene (illus. 218). An interesting example is the wooden frame for Ivan Kramskoy's painting *Christ in the Wilderness* (*Khristos v pustyne*, 1872; Tretyakov Gallery, illus. 219). It is secured at each corner by a grim piece of knotted rope, suggestive of the tortures of Christ (illus. 220). However, in the fulfilment of its ornamental function, this element of the frame excluded a mystical reading of the picture; it simply gave rise to a *feeling* of the authenticity of the depiction on canvas through a process of association – a leading principle of the naturalistic aesthetic. 'Association' was understood at this time as the coming together of different psychic elements to form a complex combination of emotions.[99] The source of association was taken to be memory, while the source of aesthetic pleasure was seen as the direct experience of contemplating art. Hence the ornament on Kramskoy's frame in the

217 Fyodor Vasil'yev, *Abandoned Mill*, 1872. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



form of one of the instruments in the torments of Christ strengthened the psychological power of the image, making essentially the same kind of primal impact as the real-life objects used in Vereshchagin's exhibitions. The ornament left an awareness of the boundaries of the psychological world; it embodied the cogency of a 'historical fact' from the life of the Saviour. The frame gave promise that the painting was a genuine re-creation of events.

An especially powerful emotional atmosphere was created by the frame for Vasiliy Pukirev's *An Unequal Marriage* (*Neravnyy brak*, *c.* 1862; Tretyakov Gallery, illus. 221, 222). This painting is a comparatively rare example of an artist's relationship with his frame-maker in that the latter is depicted in the picture itself, in the background of the scene of the marriage of the young bride to the old general. In his memoirs N. A. Mudrogel', one of the first curators of

218 Vasiliy Perov, *Modern Idyll: Drawing of the Picture and its Frame*, 1880. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.





219 Ivan Kramskoy, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 1872. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

220 Detail of frame.



221 Vasiliy Pukirev, *An Unequal Marriage*, in a frame by the Grebensky workshop, *c.* 1862. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



the Tretyakov and an assiduous retailer of gossip of all kinds, describes how, after Pukirev had completed the painting, the frame-maker Grebensky decided to make a frame for it 'such as has never been made before'.[100] In keeping with the emotional tension of the scene, the frame is covered with bare stalks only occasionally relieved by leaves, flowers and fruit, emphasizing the tragic position of the bride. If we are to believe Mudrogel' (and Repin), the impact made by the framed picture when it was first shown

222 Detail of frame.



in Moscow caused withdrawals from 'unequal' marriages, one famous case involving the historian Nikolay Kostomarov (1817–1885).[101] Grebensky's frame made a strong impression on Pavel Tretyakov, who proceeded to order from him a large number of frames that may be seen in his collection today, for example that for Alexander Ivanov's study *At the Foot of Vikovara: Stones on a River Bank* (*Podnozhiye Vikovary. Kamni na beregu reki*).

The frame for Repin's portrait of Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov (1891; Tretyakov Gallery, illus. 223) is strong testimony against the above-quoted opinion regarding this painter's lack of judgement over his frames, and even points to the question of an inner connection between dress and architecture to which growing attention is being paid today. This architecturally conceived frame echoes elements of the subject's dress, especially the stylized aiguillettes; the grand prince – brother of Alexander I and Nicholas I – was not only a playwright, translator and poet but also an adjutant-general, an infantry general and commander of the Preobrazhensky Life-Guard Regiment. The ornament of the frame lends the image a special elevation and charge, and as it were clothes and embellishes both picture

223 Ilya Repin, *Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov*, 1891. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

and subject. The painting and its frame were both executed for a celebratory occasion, as was indicated to the master framer by his client.

The Quest for Concord

The revolution in the academic norms of painting that took place in Russia during the period of *stil' modern* – the Russian version of the Art Nouveau movement in Western Europe – brought the emergence of the so-called Symbolist frame. The aesthetic principles of the Wanderers had demanded frames that would enhance the naturalistic illusion of objects in space for paintings that were exercises in verisimilitude. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Symbolist painters of the World of Art (Mir iskusstvo) movement (1898–1904: Alexander Benua, Konstantin Somov, Léon Bakst, Nikolay Rerikh and others) and the Blue Rose (Golubaya roza) group (1907–1910: Pavel Kuznestsov, Nikolay Sapunov, Sergey Sudeykin, Martiros Saryan) changed the meaning and purpose of the easel painting, making it into a vehicle for the communication of a complex set of emotions and experiences, the embodiment of abstract concepts such as fear, longing, tenderness, love, and also painterly interpretation of literary subjects and scenes from theatre, with heroes from folk tales and from Christian and pagan mythology.

This subordination of a painting to the artist's imagination, the communication of his feelings and moods, led to an enhancement of its decorative aspect. The artist aimed to make a painting a special creation, enclosed in its own world. He worked close to the surface of the canvas; his palette became more conventionalized and less naturalistic; the depth of depicted space was significantly foreshortened. All this made the painting more like a decorative panel or tapestry, which also changed the conception of the frame. The decorative and self-enclosed mode of representation placed the picture, as it were, in conflict with its frame, making the outer border not the frame but its own contours, while the frame more and more often needed to find 'concord' with the mode of the image. Once the painting lost the illusion of real space and became more isolated from the space around it, its frame could no longer act as a 'window' guiding the eye into the depths of the picture; all the frame could do was to separate the painting from the surrounding wall – or even link it with the wall. Hence the Symbolist frame took the form sometimes of a thin gilt strip, sometimes of a flat, lightly decorated 'ribbon' setting the painting off from the surrounding space. It was a short step from such a frame to the minimalist display style of the avant-garde, as seen, for example, at the 'Blue Rose' exhibition of 1907 in Moscow where the narrow frames were calculated to emphasize the painterly qualities of the pictures and enhance their emotional meaning (illus. 224).

These frames set off, in particular, the understated dimension of the Symbolist painters, the vacillating images from the subconscious world of the imagination, forever being transformed and reduplicated in myriad colours. Here the effect of the Symbolist frames is that of a poetic mist enveloping the paintings and at the same time introducing a special sharpness to the symbolic world. As already mentioned, Vasil'yev and Perov chose the type of frame that seemed to them to suit the content of their paintings best. By contrast, the Symbolist painters incorporated the ornament and design of a frame in the overall conception of a painting, in accordance



with the new philosophical and aesthetic ideas of the time. And if the picture frame of the Baroque and Neoclassical periods could link up with the perception of both fantasy and reason, the Symbolist frame (within the mainstream of Romantic tradition) led to the activation of the unconscious and the frame of mind that the Symbolists called 'ecstasy'. In other words, the Symbolist frame brought painting a new connection with culture at large as well as with the individuality of the artist.

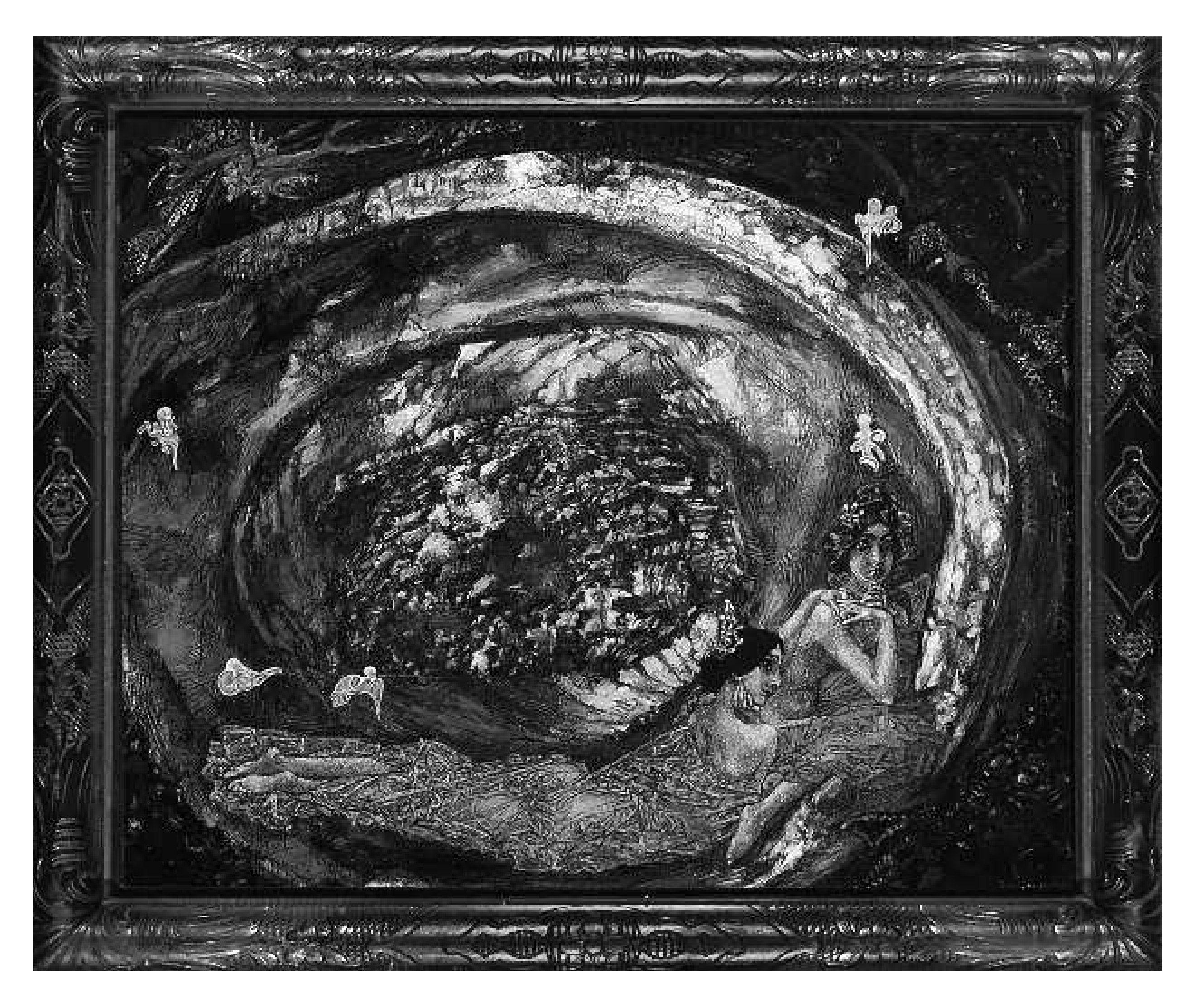
A letter from Vrubel to his client Prince Sergey Shcherbatov is clear testimony that the choice and ornamentation of a frame was a creative task on its own for the artist (illus. 225).

> Your picture is ready, it's turned out well, come and have a look, I've called it 'The Pearl'. I've done mermaids, as if they're swimming in a shell, *I'm worried about the frame*, at the moment it's broad and grey, but I want to decorate all of it – let's discuss it. [my emphasis][102]

The Symbolist picture frame always demanded the viewer's creative interpretation of the painting, for

224 The 'Blue Rose' exhibition, 1907.

the Symbolists believed that only through the creative process could the essence of phenomena be grasped. For them the frame, indeed, corresponded to the Romantic concept of beauty, which had been called upon, we may remember, to transform the world. Hence the Symbolist frame was a thing of exquisite refinement, in harmony with the spiritual order of the depiction. Vrubel is known to have taken a course at the Stroganov Institute in drawing from growing plants and the creation of ornament, both of which always afforded him means of escaping into a world of mystically tinged fantasies. He would look at flames and then draw them from memory in an ornamental composition; examine growing flowers and see symbolic forms in them, leading to a secret realm of myth and reverie.[103] According to his own testimony, ornament lay at the heart of his creative imagination and view of the world – for him it contained the structure of phenomena.[104] Here Vrubel was to some extent



225 Mikhail Vrubel, *The Pearl*, 1904. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



a precursor of Cubism, in that for him form was structural and ornamental, splitting up into a multiplicity of coloured surfaces, with different sides to view, illuminated from within. Conse - quently, his paintings, as was the case with Cézanne, sometimes seemed a tight fit in their frames, which needed to adapt to a new system of painting. That this was not easy is shown by the problem of the frame for *The Pearl* (*Zhemchuzhina*, 1904; Tretyakov Gallery); Prince Shcherbatov disliked the idea of painting it, and Vrubel left it undecorated. As it was left, the picture clearly does not link up with its frame: its decorative, enclosed world patently needs a frame of a subordinate kind with special ornamentation that will reinforce these qualities. Recognizing and pointing out the ornamental structure of the mythical-poetic 'reality' of his painting, the artist wanted to make the frame contribute to the artistic task, which unfortunately his client failed to understand.[105]

In general, however, Vrubel's frames are in harmony with his paintings. The symbolism of a painting is enhanced by the symbolism of its frame – assuming that the artist is directly involved in the planning and making of the frame, as in the case of the frame for *The Demon Overthrown* (*Demon poverzhennyy*, 1902; Tretyakov Gallery), which is ornamented with a cloth border and a narrow strip of silverwork depicting laurel branches bound by a ribbon, clearly symbolizing tragedy and death and carrying a funerary aura. The frame emphasizes the tragic meaning of the painting, merged with the



226 Mikhail Vrubel, *The Demon Overthrown*, 1902. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

227 Detail of frame.



artist's personal drama (illus. 226, 227). Inspired by Lermontov's narrative poem *The Demon*, the picture displays the majestic and fantastic image of the fallen angel, presenting not only a scene of theomachy but also the tragic fate of the artist himself, who became insane soon after finishing the work. It is a powerful depiction of a typical theme of the period of the *stil' modern* in Russian art, the breakdown of consciousness, a picture of a world of restlessness and instability. The frame weaves subtle ideas around this image, interpretable both as being in accord with the graphic-musical theme of the struggle and death of the Romantic hero and also as resolution of the spiritual drama and tension as the half-mad artist-genius's battle with himself (*à la* Schopenhauer) is brought to an end.

The Symbolist frame opened the way for a synthesis of the arts. Vrubel contributed to the stage design of productions of Savva Mamontov's private opera company in the 1890s, including the sets and costume for Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*. He painted the *Sea King's Farewell to Princess Volkhova* (*Prosh - chaniye tsarya morskogo s tsarevnoy Volkhovoy*, 1898; Tretyakov Gallery) on themes from this opera and following the style of his set designs (illus. 228). The frame of the painting enhances the associative and metaphorical interpretation of it as a scene from the opera. Stylized ornamental water-lilies 'appear' on the frame as if from the pictorial scheme, so that the boundary between art and real life begins to vacillate and pulsate, and the mytho-poetic world depicted seems to recede into the space beyond the picture. The frame no longer calls upon the painting to be a mirror to the real world; on the contrary, it becomes, as it were, an echo and shadow of its picture, playing with it, drawing it into a realm of ambiguity and mystification. Something is happening in this frame that transcends aesthetic boundaries, uniting and merging different art forms.

This intermediate position of the picture frame between the aesthetic sphere and the real world is reminiscent of the ideas of the religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'yov (1853–1900), Richard Wagner and the Russian Symbolist poets. The idea

228 Mikhail Vrubel, *The Sea King's Farewell to Princess Volkhova*, 1898. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

that art should have ultimate aims beyond the limits of aesthetics undoubtedly came from Solov'yov, Wagner and Nietzsche. At the turn of the century, Solov'yov's conception of the transformative function of beauty was taken to indicate the need for a new role in society for the artist and for paintings, a role understood as a religious-Romantic mission of social renewal based on the laws of beauty. At the same time Wagner's conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* pointed the way to the 'art of the future', the principal form of which was seen as 'music drama'.[106] In *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music: A Foreword to Richard Wagner*, Nietzsche reflected that art could bring a renewal of the tragic and be a way of overcoming the limits of the phenomenal world. He thought of the act of creation as both visionary and orgiastic, and of the created image as a way to the infinite by virtue of its heterogeneity. 'Art is not exclusively imitation of the reality of nature,' he emphasized, 'but rather a metaphysical complement of this reality, placed beside it in order to overcome it.'[107] On the fringes of this conception of the tasks of art, not only Vrubel but most of the Symbolist painters, especially those of the World of Art and the Blue Rose, took an extremely active part in the theatre. 'Music drama' opened the way to 'universal mystery drama' and the merging of different art forms, spatial and temporal. 'That was when I was really pleased to see an authentic *Gesamtkunstwerk*,' Alexander Benua recalled of Marius Petipa's production of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* in January 1890.[108] Now, however, far from the picture frame all these ideas and events may seem, they are nevertheless all linked with it.

At the same time that Vrubel took part in the realization of a new conception of music theatre in the above-mentioned production of *Sadko*, he reviewed the canons of the easel painting and its frame, which were beginning, in ways characteristic of the theatre, to take up communication of a complex range of experiences, in particular a sense of play and musicality. The concept 'picture – frame' had already, in its own way, achieved the ideal of synthetic art, influenced, if not directly then at least indirectly, by Wagnerian ideas. Hence the Symbolist frame at times conducted itself invasively and entered the picture plane – in, for example, Konstantin Somov's *Magic* (*Volshebstvo*, 1904; Russian Museum, St Petersburg) – at times assumed features of the image itself, at times minimalized itself so as to become scarcely noticeable, leaving a painting to appear self-sufficient and capable of saying everything it wanted to say by painterly means. Moreover, all this was taking place not just on the picture frame but also in industrial, exhibition and stage design and book illustration.

In the intellectual and artistic world of this period, contact between art, poetry and music took both theoretical and practical form. Poets devoted their work to the creations of painters, and Symbolist painters took an active part in the illustration of literary works.[109] Book jackets and frontispieces of editions of Symbolist verse, visually framing the text, sometimes (like the picture frame) turned into complex commentaries while being original works of art. Such, for example, was Konstantin Somov's frontispiece to Vyacheslav Ivanov's *Cor Ardens* (1910), with its flower symbolism opening into a new, mystical world, characteristic of the poet, unfolding in the images of the text, at its heart the 'Anthology of the Rose'.[110]

The frame in the 'Russian style' served general interest in the world of folklore, and the frame of



229 Nikolay Rerikh, *The Messenger*, 1897. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
230 Detail of frame.

the Symbolist picture on a historical subject served authentic myth-making in the spirit of Ivanov or Andrey Bely. An example of this is the frame of Rerikh's *The Messenger* (*Gonets*, 1897; Tretyakov Gallery), made of coarse-coloured bast bearing pagan mythological symbols (illus. 229, 230). In formulating the philosophical bases of Symbolism, Ivanov considered the aesthetics of myth in close connection with the aesthetics of the symbol and identified the mytho-poetic as one of the fundamental tasks for contemporary art. His ideas of founding a community held together by adherence to the same aesthetic-religious ideals had obvious significance for the Symbolist treatment of frames, the aesthetic of which was beginning to show clear theurgic tendencies towards the merging of the spiritual sphere with everyday reality. In Ivanov's words:

> It is not a question . . . of prophetic or any other kind of significance of individual new works of art or individual statements of new thought – but of the general orientation of the spiritual landscape, of the character of inner and half-unconscious inclinations of creative energies.[111]

Hence the powerfully effective way in which the frame of Rerikh's picture drew the viewer's eye into the heart of the mytho-poetic world of ancient Russian history, thus emphasizing the idea of beauty and the dominion of art over life. In this sense the frame actively formed an artistic image, not only presenting the picture as belonging to a wholly defined epoch but also making the symbolic image interpretable as a live aesthetic category. At the heart of the subject lay Rerikh's well-known passion for the ancient history of the Slavs, and at the heart of the ornament of the frame his interest in the archaeology of ancient Rus'. Placing pagan images on the frame and, in the Symbolist manner, making their meanings imprecise by blurring them away almost to illegibility, the artist clearly wished the viewer actually to feel the 'spirit' of ancient history and imagine the historical scene as existing invisibly in the present. With the mysterious beauty of its material surface (coarse bast, wooden slats, gilt symbolic images) this frame suggested the unstable world of the senses – impossible to express in words – of that 'primitive' popular culture, with the traces of its organic and collective spirit lost but imaginable, and here, it would seem, lay its principal significance for the perception of the painting.

A dependence on the world of ideas is also shown by the Symbolist frames for four of Mikhail Nesterov's paintings (all in the Tretyakov Gallery): *The Vision of the Boy Bartholomew* (*Videniye otroku Varfolomeyu*, 1889–90), *The Boyhood of St Sergius of Radonezh* (*Yunost' prepodobnogo Sergiya Radonezhskogo*, 1892–7), *The Labours of St Sergius* (*Trudy prepodobnogo Sergiya*, 1896–7) and *St Olga, Equal of the Apostles* (*Svyataya ravnoapostol'naya knyaginya Ol'ga*, illus. 231, 232). The frames for the paintings connected with the life of St Sergius of Radonezh were ordered from A. Grab'ye by agreement with the artist, who wrote to Ilya Ostroukhov from Paris on 27 June 1900:

> I will end my letter with a request to you managers of the gallery. Might you find it possible, in the interests of our cause, to change (at my charge of course) the frames for 'Sergey and the Bear' and 'The Youth of Sergey'. Here is an old



> wish of mine – I have long wanted to make the frames for these two pictures 'in style' and I've spoken to Grab'ye about this.[112]

The frames of all these paintings shared the same features: they combined forms of Western European altar settings with the Russian icon case, which prepared the viewer to interpret them as religious images. Not for the first time, Romantic art disputed with the icon and assumed religious functions. But these frames were not calculated to arouse emotions or enhance the impressions made by the images. Their function was quite different: they demanded that the viewer should contemplate each painting as a kind of aesthetic revelation suffused with religious and mystical feeling, authoritatively indicating that each painting had 'appeared' to the Romantic artist in the same way as icons appeared to the early saints. 'A work of art that has appeared to the artist (which does not happen often)', wrote Nesterov,

> is inviolable . . . and always has a vital superiority to the work that is premeditated . . . This is how it was with *The Miracle* (*Chudo*) – the painting appeared to me ready finished, and it only remained for me to transfer it to canvas.[113]

Hence, for Nesterov, the merging of the terms 'icon' and 'painting':

> I really don't know myself what's an 'image' and what's a 'painting' . . . The images in the Vladimir Cathedral [the cathedral of St Vladimir in Kiev,

231 Mikhail Nesterov, *The Labours of St Sergius*, 1896–7, triptych, with a frame by A. Grab'ye's workshop. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

1885–96] are paintings and images at the same time.[114]

In the first part of this book, in connection with Aleksey Shchusev's exhibition 'The Novgorod Icon Hall', an attempt was made to comprehend how the display of early icons was inspired by a theurgic aesthetic, inasmuch as the beauty of the icon was called upon to renew the world. The same could be said of Nesterov's paintings, in which mytho-poetical imagery and religious-didactic symbolism partake of the atmosphere of the icon, Russian religious philosophy and the literature of Holy Rus'. Nesterov depicts the movement of the world towards Transfiguration. In his figures and landscapes he develops the idea of the wisdom of Russian Orthodoxy, the impact of Sophia, Holy Wisdom, on the natural and the human world. And so the ideal world he depicts is emphasized by frames that make his paintings not only look like icons but also seem capable of drawing the world towards an apprehension of divine mystery and the Slavophile ideals of *sobornost'*, the idea of cooperation between individuals, as opposed to individualism, in an organic community.[115] In this sense his frames bring to pictorial philosophy an element of inspiring synthesis, of accord with the aesthetic-religious ideals of the period. They proclaim that 'theurgic dimension' which was understood as 'a joining of the peaks of Symbolism and Mysticism'.[116]

At the same time, the work of the Russian Symbolist painters is inseparable from the European context, from Pre-Raphaelite picture frames, the ramifications of the idea of the *Gesamt - kunstwerk*, the experiments of the Impressionists and new concepts of exhibitions. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James Whistler, Arthur Hughes, Albert Moore, Charles Collins, William Holman Hunt and Edward Burne-Jones all made bold use of stylized medieval altar forms and Renaissance niches and included all kinds of historical and literary texts and images in the ornamentation of frames.[117] Typical of the latter is that of the so-called secular altar painting *The Eve of St Agnes* by Arthur Hughes, a triptych depicting three episodes from Keats's poem in a frame looking like an altarpiece (illus. 233) A similar type of frame was used by Puvis de Chavannes and Bastien-Lepage for their Romantic-religious paintings imbued with the spirit of Catholicism, which inspired Nesterov.



232 Mikhail Nesterov, *St Olga, Equal of the Apostles*, n.d. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



In the 1880s the picture frame acquired a special importance in the work of the Munich painter Franz von Lenbach, who collected Italian Renaissance frames for the purposes of his work, and with which he framed the Raphael, Rubens and Titian originals that he possessed.[118] In his conception of the *Studio-Gesamtkunstwerk* (developed partly under the influence of the Austrian painter Hans Markart and very much in the mainstream of the Wagnerian 'unity of the arts' movement), the picture frame was an inseparable element of the overall artistic and decorative environment of his famous Munich studio. On the one hand it linked its painting to the interior architectural setting, and on the other it lent it an aura of general harmony that included it in the aesthetic order of the life surrounding it. Lenbach conceived his studio as an artistic entity in which stylized frames of earlier periods mystified the visitor, to whom they and the paintings they contained looked as if they might be originals. Not only did copies and originals join in this game, but even the artist's dress played its part in aestheticizing the environment in which 'great art' had once been created.

Recalling the German art world at this time, Repin observed:

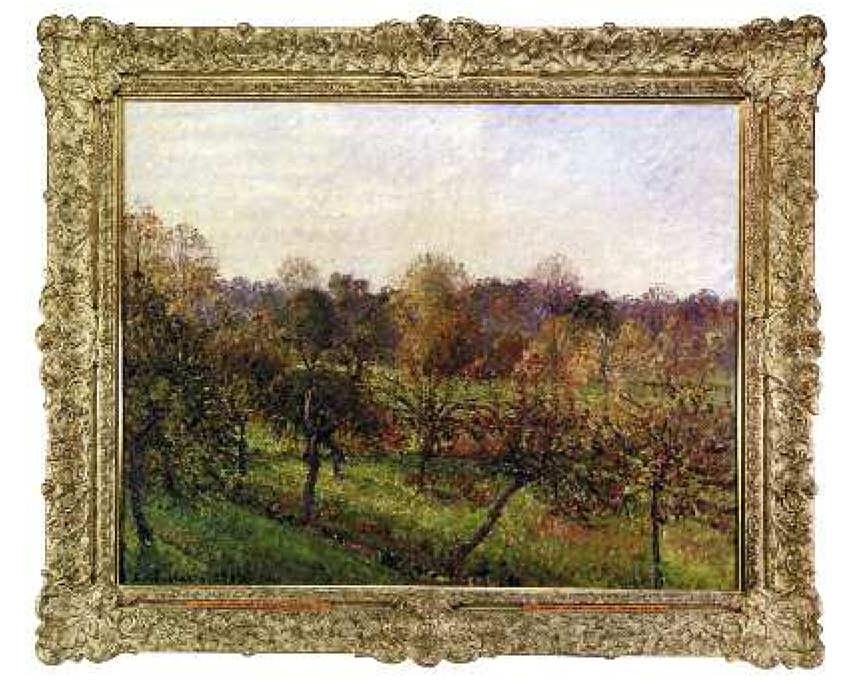
> Artists of the first rank conducted themselves here with all the refinements of aristocratic society. Even in their studios, which were elegantly decorated, they were fashionably dressed, as for a drawing room.

233 Arthur Hughes, *The Eve of St Agnes*, 1856. Tate Britain, London.

He commented that Lenbach's copies of Titian were regarded 'as originals'.[119] Lenbach not only developed and realized the synthesis of the arts in the studio, but also disseminated it in his *Gesamtkunstwerk* exhibition, which had a significant influence on the exhibitions of Vereshchagin. 'We shall lose all our reputation,' Lenbach reflected as he was preparing his exhibition in Vienna in 1873, 'if we cannot attract the public's attention to the decoration of the walls'.[120] Here he laid the foundations for the future Jugendstil exhibitions, in which the picture frame, designed to bring art and life together, still retained that aura of high art of which Walter Benjamin wrote.

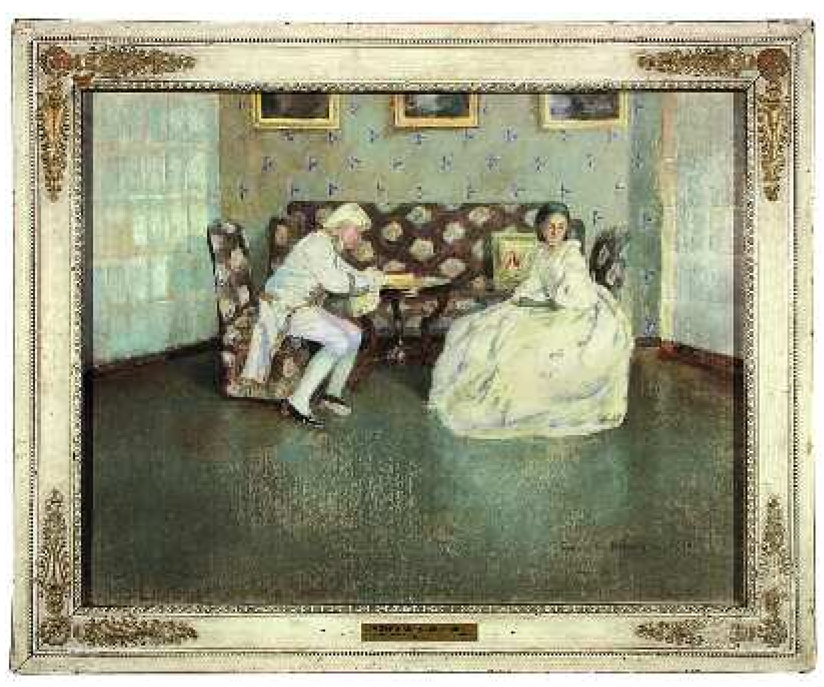
Special attention was devoted to the picture frame in the 1870s by the French Impressionists, who made the famous 'white frame' a symbol of fashionable trends in European painting. Georges Seurat even allotted the white frame of *Models* (1888) its place in the composition of the painting,[121] and he went on to experiment with his frames more often than other painters, posing new questions of visual interpretation. He would paint a frame while working on the painting itself, paying particular attention to the meeting-point of picture and frame, that is, the transition point from the frame to the canvas and vice versa.[122] Camille Pissarro, too, began to experiment with the frame by setting paintings within arrangements of white selvages, which reminded unfriendly critics of cut-off edges of cardboard boxes. All this sprang from the Impressionists' conviction that white frames had the effect of emphasizing the merits of paintings, following the French chemist Eugène Chevreul's theory of the harmony and contrasts of colours, according to which white increased the intensity of the colours of the spectrum.[123] The Impressionists' use of overpainted frames from the Louis XIV period is explained partly by aesthetic theory and partly by commercial considerations (illus. 234). These frames served as a bridge between their artistic experiments and the tastes of the bourgeois public; to European and American collectors they even became a nominal term – 'Impressionist frame' – and may be seen today in almost every major American and European museum. It is possible that they might have been seen in the collections of Sergey Shchukin and Ivan Morozov, who bought Impressionist paintings in Paris in the 1890s.

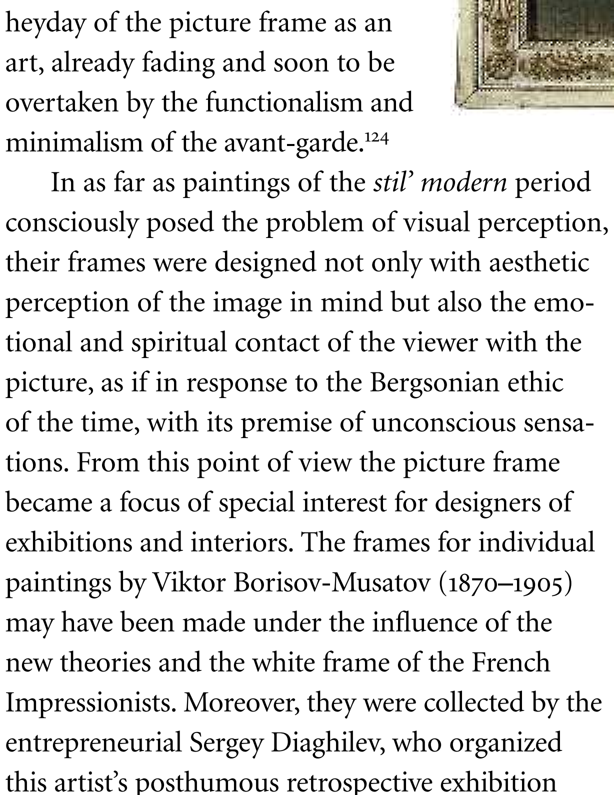
Western European experiments with the picture frame were, of course, known to Russian artists of



234 Camille Pissarro, *Sunset in Eragny*, 1902. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford.

the time, many of whom studied and worked in Paris, Rome, London, Munich or Vienna. Regarding the frame, then, as an integral part of the whole creative project, Vrubel, Rerikh, Nesterov and others clothed it with original ornament and forms to serve specific creative ends. All kinds of frames for paintings, icons, photographs, whimsical aedicules, theatre curtains and much else have been preserved to remind us of this last, wonderfully beautiful phase in the heyday of the picture frame as an art, already fading and soon to be overtaken by the functionalism and minimalism of the avant-garde.[124]





In as far as paintings of the *stil' modern* period consciously posed the problem of visual perception, their frames were designed not only with aesthetic perception of the image in mind but also the emotional and spiritual contact of the viewer with the picture, as if in response to the Bergsonian ethic of the time, with its premise of unconscious sensations. From this point of view the picture frame became a focus of special interest for designers of exhibitions and interiors. The frames for individual paintings by Viktor Borisov-Musatov (1870–1905) may have been made under the influence of the new theories and the white frame of the French Impressionists. Moreover, they were collected by the entrepreneurial Sergey Diaghilev, who organized this artist's posthumous retrospective exhibition in 1906, at which his paintings were shown 'in narrow white frames on white muslin', wholly in accordance with Diaghilev's conception of the World of Art exhibitions – for which Vereshchagin had pioneered the way (illus. 235).[125]

As is well known, *stil' modern* exhibitions made use of multi-coloured cloths and furniture, vases of flowers and music creating an environment for the reading of poetry and prose and for instrumental and ballet performances.[126] One real work of art was the portrait exhibition in the Tauride Palace in 1905 organized by Diaghilev with Benua and Bakst, not only embodying Benua's conception of the evolution of portrait-painting but also presenting an architecturally unified spatial ensemble in which new methods of displaying paintings were employed.[127] The arrangement of pictures followed the principle of glorification of the Russian monarchs. The portraits were shown in alcoves of different colours according to cultural-historical periods. In the middle of each alcove was a ceremonial portrait of an emperor in a special installation

235 Viktor Borisov-Musatov, *Wordless Scene*, 1900.
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

imitative of a throne, designed by a famous architect – the portrait of Alexander I, for example, by Thomas Lawrence was displayed on a 'throne' after drawings by Alexandre Tamanyan and Leontiy Benua. The motif of the garden ran through the exhibition, a number of portraits and works of sculpture featuring decorative plants based on Bakst's sketches.

Exhibitions of the *stil' modern* period focused on the combined effects of different art forms. The exhibition *Modern Art* put on in St Petersburg in 1903 showed living interiors designed by well-known artists – a drawing room by Alexander Benua and Yevgeniy Lanseray, a boudoir by Bakst, a 'tea room' by Konstantin Korovin, and so on – in which articles of fine crafts and paintings were displayed, picture frames harmonizing with the aesthetic atmosphere of each interior and the symbolic aura of the paintings of the World of Art group. In this exhibition the applied arts, as Prince Sergey Shcherbatov, one of its organizers, recalls,

> were to display the combined ideas of a number of artists becoming involved in the creation of interiors of homes as an organic, harmonious whole, beginning with walls and furniture and ending with the minutest details, which would carry out the principle of unity I have put forward as a universal law.[128]

In other words, form and ornament of the picture frame were to be considered a matter not only for the artist but also for his client, owner of the surrounding property, the design of which at this time was a result of an aesthetic environment saturated with artistic means and decorative forms of all kinds. Such interiors are shown in contemporary photographs of the houses of the Morozov family on Spiridonovka (1893, architect Fedor Shekhtel') and A. I. Konshinaya on Prechistenka in Moscow (1910, Anatoly Gunst) and G. G. Yeliseyev in St Petersburg (1892, V. G. Baranovsky).

The ornamental lavishness of Art Nouveau movements found its celebrated critic in the Austrian architect Adolf Loos, who countered the cult of originality with 'the taste for simplicity' and the expedient:

> As there is no longer any organic connection between ornament and our culture, ornament is no longer an expression of our culture. The ornament being created now bears no relationship to us, nor to any human being, or to the system governing the world today. It has no potential for development.[129]

The American architect Louis Henry Sullivan had essentially the same message in his article 'Ornament in Architecture' published in *The Engineering Magazine* in 1892:

> I take it as self-evident that a building, quite devoid of ornament, may convey a noble and dignified sentiment by virtue of mass and proportion. It is not evident to me that ornament can intrinsically heighten these elemental qualities. Why, then, should we use ornament?[130]

In this search for the purity of rational forms the picture frame too lost its ornament. In so far as it had not succeeded in finding concord with its picture, its plain surfaces were proof that a painting's

artistic qualities could be revealed without the help of ornamental hints and symbols. And now for the first time in the history of European painting this meant that the painting was to stand on its own as an independent representation of essence and reality. The time had come for a radical review of the theory of the frame.

The Avant-garde: Overcoming the Frame

Visual culture of the period of Art Nouveau, or in Russian terms the *stil' modern*, harboured a presentiment of the approaching demise of the image that relied on the Renaissance frame-as-window. We may recall that for Kant the frame indicated that a painting was an autonomous and impenetrable world. In his opinion a gilt frame was only a parergon, an addition, not an integral part of a total representation of an object;[131] it emphasized the non-real nature of a work of art and outlined the picture plane as a world of absolute harmony. But even in the Romantic period art began to lay claim to ultimate truth about the world, and the frame, in its subordination to the painting, was reduced to a thin lath. The Russian avant-garde between 1910 and 1920 announced the end of the era of the easel painting. 'A painting today,' the modern German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has written,

> is not only deprived of an integrated subject, so that all ideas of the unity of the depicted myth, the subject or recognizable subject matter, which once formed the basis for mimetic depiction, have disappeared. Also lost is a unified point of view, as it existed in the period of linear perspective when a painting was a window into a defined space . . . A painting today is not contained by a frame; on the contrary, where there is a frame, the picture contains it from inside itself . . . The artist has destroyed the frame. The flat structure which forms the picture has outstripped its bounds and points to wider horizons.[132]

In other words, in place of the mimetic easel painting the avant-garde offered a fundamentally different visual image that had the faculty of building its own reality according to its own laws, removed from the real world. The new work of art was open to the transcendental and its endeavour was to reveal as much as possible of the inner significance of things. Freed from mimetic illusion, painting opened a way to the beauty of inner structures, reducing the figurative character of visible natural forms and turning to their invisible inner essence. In so far as reality can be formulated in terms of meaning, the new art found a stimulus for a long-standing dissatisfaction with the external order of the surrounding world. The Renaissance frame-as-window served the intelligibility of the world in its unity and in its diversity. The avant-garde's abolition of the picture frame began to address the problem of the conditional nature of human knowledge of the world, its ephemerality and uncertainty. The real project of the avant-garde was not formal innovation, as for the Symbolist painters, but the attempt to place the individual in touch with the transcendental and to transform the world on the basis of 'ideas' revealed to the artist, amounting to 'cosmic' laws governing the development of being. Hence avant-garde art became a programme, its paintings symbols revealing their own content.

The work of the avant-garde, reducing a painting to the level of a symbol, was a crucial attempt at the transgression of human boundaries in art history. This transgression, as 'a gesture directed at a limit' (Foucault), led to the disappearance of the subject in painting and the emergence of abstraction, rejecting exclusive contemplation of the external world. The result was a breakthrough transcending the limits of human possibilities. The conviction arose that the new kind of image must – as was the case with the icon – capture the visual reality of the numinous. Such a painting therefore demanded not aesthetic experience but appreciation that its endeavour was to penetrate to the essence both of being and of the visible material world. And in so far as it rejected the imitation of external appearances, of mimetic likeness, it had no need of the Renaissance frame-as-window, which indicated the artifice of art. The new art found some degree of correspondence with external reality and some degree of inner meaning. It transformed the painting into an object of 'genuine reality', an independent 'organic entity' containing its own *raison d'être*: 'A painting must not be simply imitation,' wrote Gleizes and Metzinger, 'it should openly declare its own existence.'[133]

Hence the frame of an avant-garde painting was wholly subordinate to its inner structure. But the very absence of a frame could bring out the meaning of a picture, its own 'reality' and 'essence'. Consequently, a non-figurative painting could 'go with' an early icon next to it on a wall, both images being open to the transcendental, and both being unconnected with external reality. An avant-garde painting might have a thin minimalist lath by way of a frame, dictated by the concept of a work of art as an aesthetic object that not only 'spoke for itself' but was also intended to give new form to external reality. Narrow frames emphasized the 'musicality' of the paintings shown at the exhibitions of the Symbolist painters of the Blue Rose. Avant-garde painters used a minimalist strip either to hold a composition together or to be held by it, or to be a part of it, thus establishing the presence of art in life. The new kind of picture was no longer interpreted as a separate world of symbolic forms hidden behind the frame. In overcoming the frame, it laid claim to a reality of its own and became involved in human life at large. Eventually, avant-garde painting was able to accommodate the traditional frame-as-window; but at that stage images would acquire supplementary meanings connected with newly discovered means of perceiving art. Seeking to substantiate these meanings in their manifestos, avant-garde artists took as their theoretical foundations the latest findings of science and technology such as the theory of Relativity, the splitting of the atom, cinematography and discoveries in optics, and were influenced by new concepts in philosophy, psychology and theosophy. As a result, the aesthetic idea of a painting came to presuppose a new process of perception, for which the Renaissance frame-as-window could serve as a symbol of art of the past, professing cognition of the world but superseded in the new direction taken by art, or as a frame that had lost its symbolic role as a window and now served exclusively to proclaim the new 'painterly meaning' of painting. A painting and its frame were no longer linked by the laws of optics but by a common search for essences.

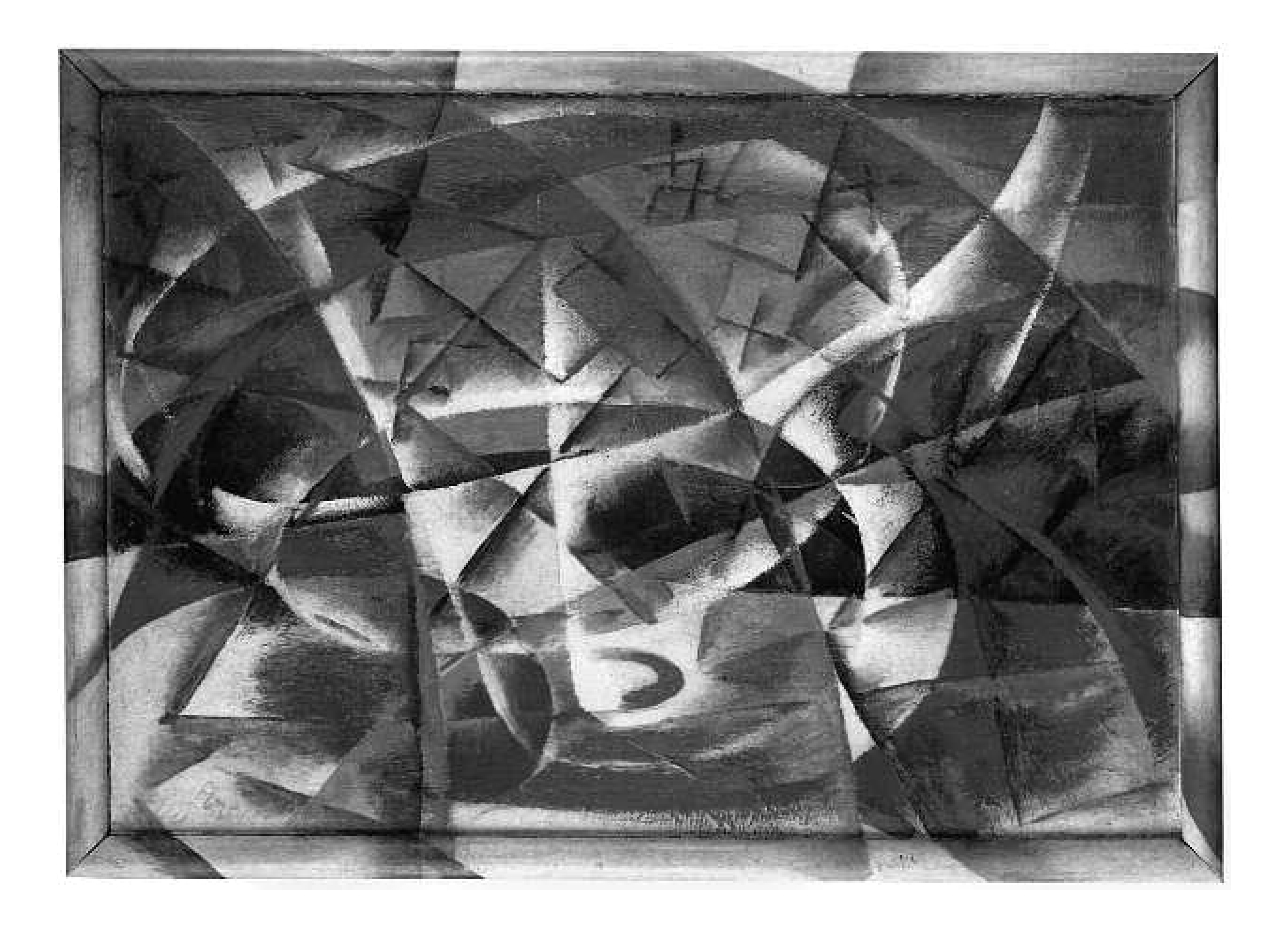
All this became evident in Cubist art, which, in the words of one of its advocates, the avant-garde artist A. Grishchenko, posed 'the problem of a new realistic depiction of objects by means of decon-

struction'.[134] Viewing an object not from a single but from several viewpoints simultaneously could turn a gilt frame either into a less than obligatory element of the old construction 'picture–frame' or into simply a formal edging to the canvas. This may be seen in a photograph taken in the 1910s of an exhibition in Moscow of Sergey Shchukin's Picasso collection, and also in a photograph of 1911 of Picasso himself in his Paris studio, in which a Cubist work in a gilt frame of an earlier period is visible.[135] Some specialists have concluded that the French Cubists preferred to use sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish frames because they thought this particular form facilitated the new ways in which they were aiming for their pictures to be perceived.[136] Another reason why the Cubists chose to use traditional frames was that, in contrast to their effect with abstract compositions, they helped to preserve the depiction of a solid object even in the process of deformation. A frame of an older sort could not merely surround a picture but also be part of the depiction.[137]

An older frame was used to good effect in one of Nadezhda Udal'tsova's paintings, *The Fortune-teller* (*Gadalka*, *c.* 1914; private collection, Moscow, illus. 236). This Cubo-Futurist picture seemed to burst its bounds and encroach upon and dispel the vagueness of the Symbolist frame. At one time this frame had held a Symbolist image, but now it was transformed into a structural element indistinguishable from the painting, pointing up just those 'bourgeois' ideals attacked not only by Adolf Loos but also by the Italian Futurists, in particular Giacomo Balla, whose abstract compositions aggressively did away with the frame as such, trans-



236 Nadezhda Udal'tsova, *The Fortune-teller*, *c.* 1914. Private collection.



forming it into an object of 'Futurist extremism' instead (illus. 237). In the face of the Nietzschean reappraisal of all values, the Futurists turned 'bourgeois' morality and aesthetics inside out and put forward a rapprochement between art and life in their stead. This development is strikingly seen in a photograph of Natalya Goncharova overpainted by Mikhail Larionov dating from autumn 1913: the frame decoration linking the image with the surrounding space continues on the subject's face as Futuristic make-up (illus. 238). 'It is time for art to enter life,' proclaimed Ilya Zdanevich and Larionov in their manifesto 'Why We Paint Ourselves' (1913), 'and painting our faces is the beginning of it.' Larionov continued in the same manifesto that he 'painted the sitter against the background of the carpet and extended the pattern on to her face.'[138] The Futurists aimed to arouse the viewer's complicity with the motif of make-up and the encroachment of the image upon the frame in playful provocation. The repetition of the frame decoration on Goncharova's face in the photograph offered a radically new way of perceiving an image, appealing to 'pure' consciousness, unattached to cultural norms.

Here was the destruction of the mimetic image and the Renaissance ideal of painting. The frames

237 Giacomo Balla, *Abstract Speed + Sound*, 1913. Museo d'Arte Moderna (Peggy Guggenheim Collection), Venice.

of Udal'tsova's painting and of Larionov's painted photograph showed that the framed picture had outlived itself as a cultural phenomenon. It no longer answered the spirit of the times. The principles of figurative art were replaced by those of abstraction, a turning away from depiction of the visible world towards what the artist saw with his inner vision. Painting went through an internal revolution to achieve liberation from representation and reveal the significance of things, the thing-in-itself. This significance replaced the concept of harmony and the beauty of nature and brought a new view of external reality. In reaction against the global changes in man's picture of the world caused by the scientific and technological advances of the early twentieth century, Cubo-Futurist painting diagnosed the collapse of the values adhered to by an inflexibly statistical, hierarchically ordered and anthropocentric world system. The traditional face of life had come to lose fundamental features and attributes. 'Everything, analytically speaking, is disintegrating and splitting up,' wrote Nikolay Berdyayev of the context of Cubism.



238 Natalya Goncharova, photograph with futuristic make-up decorated by Mikhail Larionov, 1913.

> By this analytical process of dismemberment, the artist seeks to reach the skeleton of things, the hard forms hidden under the softened surfaces. The material covering surfaces of the world have begun to disintegrate and to seek hard substances hidden beneath this softening.[139]

Udal'tsova's frame embodied the avant-garde theory of the 'displacement' of forms, whereby visible objects were removed from their usual contexts and thus 'made strange'. In this context the removal of a picture frame could point to the necessity of defamiliarization in the perception of a painting. The frame made 'visible' the inner structures of objects, 'displaced' the material outer cover of the visible world, laid bare the subconscious constructions of artistic thinking. But such a frame also alluded to the search for a fourth dimension. In a leaflet disseminated by the Union of Youth dated 23 March 1913, the Cubo-Futurists declared war on the World of Art artists, who looked at 'the world *through a window*' (author's emphasis). The Cubists wanted to see this world 'opened to all'; what interested them was 'extending the appreciation of beauty beyond the boundaries of consciousness'.[140]

Behind this rejection of the view 'through a window' and the demand for a 'widening of

consciousness', Cubo-Futurist theory had drawn close to philosophical and theosophical enquiry into the fourth dimension, with which events inexplicable by the known laws of physics were associated at the time. The neo-Kantian critique of the concept of three-dimensional space based on the subjective limitations of human perception was well known to the artists of the European avant-garde. Neo-Kantian philosophy replaced this concept with a new theory of a multi-dimensional universe, in which a fourth dimension was *time*. Special attention was paid by the adherents of this theory to mysticism, theosophy and occult doctrines perceived as means of opening the way to the 'widening' of human consciousness and access to the 'infinite' world of numina and the Kantian thing-in-itself, inaccessible to ordinary consciousness. Highly interactive with the aesthetic ideas of the Russian avant-garde of the 1910s in this sphere were the theoretical investigations of the philosopher P. D. Uspensky (1878–1947), writing and lecturing at this time on the fourth dimension and the necessity of penetrating to the essence of phenomena through psychic transformations in the mind of the observer. 'We must find the fourth dimension, if it exists', wrote Uspensky,

> by purely empirical means, find it in ourselves, and find a way of showing it perspectivally in three-dimensional space. Only then shall we be in a position to create 'the geometry of four dimensions' . . .
>
> The fourth dimension exists, but cannot be apprehended in normal conditions. This means that in our minds, in our apparatus of perception, something is missing; our sense organs do not register phenomena that belong to the fourth dimension. We have to discover why this is so, to which of our psycho-physical defects our lack of receptivity is to be traced, and find conditions in which the fourth dimension can become comprehensible and accessible to us.[141]

Hence the perception of Cubo-Futurist painting presupposed the discovery of a 'fourth way' – in which the subject would be able to tune his or her psyche to examine the paranormal and thereby attain so-called objective consciousness. It was important for avant-garde artists, therefore, to change both their own and their viewers' consciousness. Hence Udal'tsova's emphasis on the frame, pointing up the 'boring' illusion of three-dimensionality and presenting the viewer's consciousness with the possibility of change. And putting the word *gadalka*, 'fortune-teller', fragments of playing cards and the number 30 into the picture, the artist sought to reveal the meaning of a game of cards as a phenomenon in possession of the fourth dimension, time. 'It is very close to the goals of all Futurists', noted Uspensky,

> to break through to a four-dimensional world. The Futurists wish to depict things not in cross-sections of single moments nor from a single viewpoint, but in the course of time and from all viewpoints, 'cubically'.[142]

Thus, if all the resources of linear perspective were called upon to reconstruct the external appearance of an object, the new Cubo-Futurist perspective aimed to present that object's inner essence. In this process, not only the distortion of the appearance of natural forms but also the surface texture of canvas acquired special significance. Research has

shown the texture of canvas to determine a 'tangible' component in the perception of a painting and to be an important condition for the overcoming of the laws of natural perception and the activation of inner perception.[143]

Still more clearly, this means of widening consciousness, the avant-garde's focus on its underlying, unself-aware layers, is found in the painted relief. 'If in the past', wrote Nikolay Tarabukin in 1923,

> the three typical forms of visual art, painting, sculpture and architecture, were kept firmly separate, then . . . in the counter-relief, three-dimensional constructions and 'spatial painting', we have an attempt at something like a synthesis of these forms. Here the artist combines architectonic construction with material masses (architecture), volumetric shaping of these masses (sculpture) and decorative, textural and compositional expressiveness (painting).[144]

It was this synthesis, determining a particular texture of a painting's surface, that also proved to be a condition for painting's 'breaking out' into surrounding space. The counter-relief, taking the painting beyond the boundaries of the two-dimensional plane, overcame the picture frame, abolishing its primary function, to focus the viewer's eye on what was inside the frame.

Vladimir Tatlin's typical counter-relief was of this kind, the body of which was often reminiscent of an icon board in reverse, and the metal fragments of parts of the cladding. The relationship of the individual to the absolute was here built by means of the creation of a fundamentally new 'metaphysical' object made of material forged with the aspiration of passing beyond the boundaries of the visible world. The frame of Ivan Klyun's painterly relief *Landscape Speeding Past* (*Probegay-ushchiy peyzazh*) was conceived as an integral part of the composition (illus. 239). And moreover, it recalled the earliest type of frame construction, freeing the viewer's mind from the usual stereotypes of perception and taking it beyond the material level of existence. This relief 'laid bare' the visible material surface of the object and led the viewer's consciousness into a spiritual realm comparable to that of mystics' and occultists' immersion in the self. Here, therefore, the frame neither reinforced the philosophical meaning of the painting nor expressed avant-garde radicalism. Instead, it served as initiation into the mystery of the worked-over quality of form so characteristic of Cubo-Futurist aesthetics of the time. The point at issue was the inner reality of the fundamental materials of art. Therefore, in accordance with the founding aesthetics of Formalism, the task of the relief was to reveal a new image – the inner structure of the material laid bare. It was considered essential for the artist to reveal his innermost soul if he was to reach the soul of the thoughtful viewer.

Wassily Kandinsky's frames for his work of the 1910s and into the 1930s have no less interesting a significance. Those of the earlier period catch this artist's transition to abstraction, especially in paintings in which he used the technique of Bavarian icons on glass (*Hinterglasmalerei*). A collection of these folk icons adorned a wall of Kandinsky's Munich apartment (illus. 241). These all had rough wooden frames, worked on by Kandinsky in the process of his search for new artistic forms. Thus *All Saints. I* (*Vse svyatyye. I*, 1911; Lenbachhaus, Munich) and *Day of Judgment* (*Strashnyy sud*, 1912;



Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris) have frames of the same type, covered in blotches and indistinct geometrical figures and lines that form a kind of abstract decoration (illus. 240, 242). The frame of the first painting sets the tone for a perception of the saints' weightlessness and tendency to abstract forms. The decoration of the frame for the second painting, in which figurative forms have become abstract, no longer directs the eye into the picture, but rather lends the composition with its frame a reassuring overall harmony. This frame gives a special effect to the picture plane, seeming to expand it before the viewer's eye, structuring its space according to the significance of the abstract

239 Ivan Klyun, *Landscape Speeding Past*, 1915.
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



configurations. As a result, the picture plane is no longer defined from a single viewpoint; the frame demands that the picture be looked at from an inner, multiple viewpoint. And this development has most important consequences. Preparing the viewer's perception in this way, the frame demonstrates the dematerialization of painting, the inexorable erosion of its representational basis.

This link between the frame and the new reading of painting had its origin in Kandinsky's encounter with the world of Russian folk decoration. In his memoir *Steps*, Kandinsky describes his visit to an *izba* (a traditional log-built peasant house) in the province of Vologda, and the 'magical' effect of its decor on him. The *izba* was furnished with everyday articles: the icon corner with its icons and icon

240 Wassily Kandinsky, *All Saints*, *I*, 1911.
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.



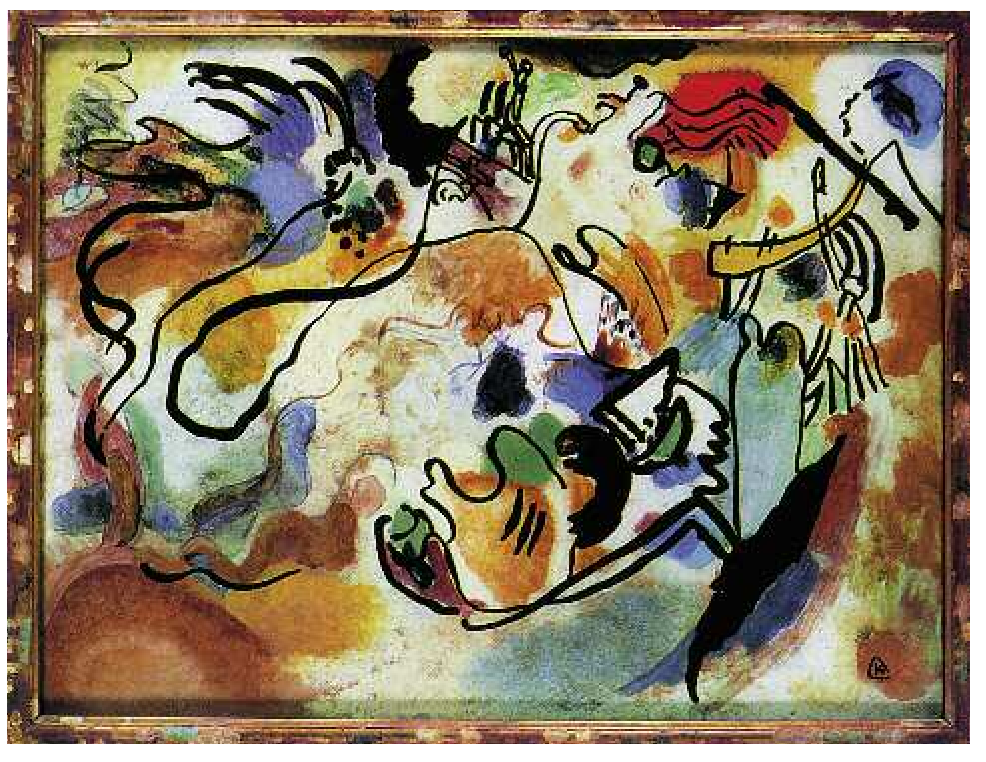
lamp, stove, table, crockery cupboards, chests and so on. But all these objects, brightly decorated in different colours, seemed to lose their material character; it was their decoration that led Kandinsky to penetrate 'physically' to the heart of what painting was, and experience in himself the enormous spiritual capacities of the language of painting. While he took in this decorative interior he experienced a 'translocation' in which he attained visual access to an abstract and transcendental universe. This experience of the world of the Russian *izba* and ecclesiastical and iconic decoration is described by Kandinsky as one of the principal steps on his way to abstract painting:

> In these unusual *izby* I first met with that miracle which was to become one of the basic elements of my work. Here I learnt not to look at a painting from outside, but *to turn round inside it*, to live in it. I vividly remember standing on the threshold looking in at this unexpected sight. The table, the benches, the huge and vital stove, the dressers and crockery cupboards – all painted in bright, sweeping colours. *Lubki* [popular woodcuts] on the walls: a symbolically depicted *bogatyr'*, fighting, a song in colour. The icon corner hung with painted and printed images, with a red-glowing lamp in front of them . . . When I finally went into the room I was surrounded by painting, and I entered it. Since then this feeling has remained with me unconsciously; I have experienced it in Moscow churches as well, especially the Cathedral of the Dormition and Basil the Blessed. After I returned from that trip I deliberately began to re-evoke it by visiting Russian churches with painted interiors, and later Bavarian and Tyrolean chapels. Of course, these inner experiences were all quite different, since

241 The collection of folk items at Kandinsky's apartment in Munich, *c.* 1913.

the painting in each church differed from one to another. A church! A Russian church! A chapel! A Catholic chapel! I often sketched decorative detail, which never strayed into trivialities and was painted so forcefully that the subject *was dissolved*. As with other impressions, I became conscious of this one much later. It is probable that it was from these experiences that my further desires and aims in art were realized. For several years I searched for means of bringing the viewer into a *painting* so that he could turn round in it, lose himself and forget himself in it. Sometimes I succeeded: I saw this from some viewers' faces. From the unconsciously intentional influence of the painting on the object depicted, which in this way received the capacity to dissolve into itself, my capacity for not noticing





242 Wassily Kandinsky, *Day of Judgment*, 1912. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

243 *Icon of the Mother of God of the Protecting Veil ('Pokrov')*. Private collection.

> objects in a painting, for so to say missing them, gradually developed. [my emphases][145]

In other words, for Kandinsky the decoration of the frame of an icon or popular woodcut not only served as rhetorical adornment or separation of the image from surrounding space, but also gave his eye the trajectory by which the beauty of the depiction entered his consciousness (illus. 243).

Thus Kandinsky would cover the frames of his paintings with coloured 'abstract' decorations in order to make the viewer enter the picture and grasp, in a mystic way, the 'supernatural' power of its beauties and forms. It is the effect of the frame that makes the reality of *All Saints. I* seem mobile: figures and landscape take flowing, almost amorphous forms, and hence acquire a dynamic of movement apt to abstract composition. The similarly decorated frame of *The Last Judgment* invites the eye, finding no object on which to focus in the surrounding space of actuality, to plunge into the space of the picture plane. The composition thereby soon poses the question of openness to the transcendental. The icon corner and decor of the peasant *izba* opened Kandinsky's eyes to the metaphysical dimension of art and the possibilities of reflecting a world of ultimate truth in painting.

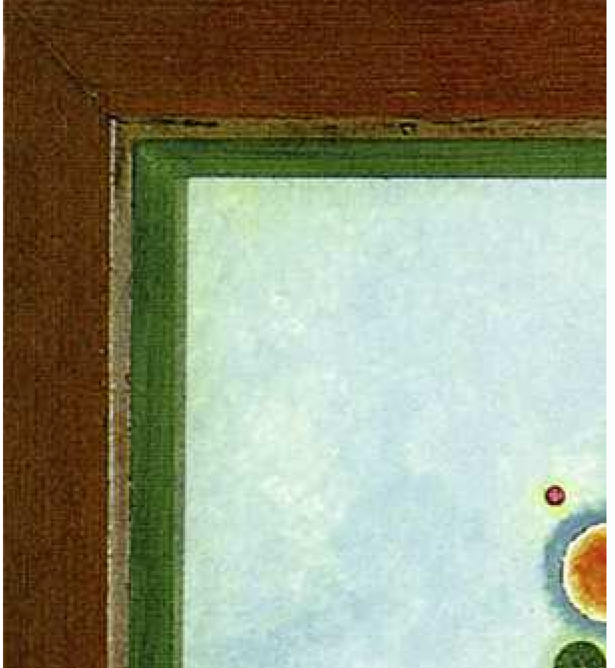
The decorative frame of an icon merged with the image and at the same time preserved it as a mystery containing the highest level of being and a transcendental source before which the icon painter was merely an executor of God's will. The frame of an abstract painting also merges with the image, but the highest level of being is revealed by the artist himself, 'removing' the coverings of external reality. This metaphysical quest is a defining condition for grasping the phenomenon of the transgression of the uncrossable boundary between the visible and the invisible, the possible and the impossible, and is what guarantees the openness of the numinous to the metaphysics of the image.[146] Hence the frame might be regarded as a step on the way to knowledge of ultimate truth, or even as the threshold of it, the painting itself being constructed on the principle of transfiguration. If *All Saints. I* bears the imprint of a sacred composition, its frame directs the eye further – to contemplation of abstract and 'intellectual' essences. It is a call for a new interpretation of the iconic tradition.

Kandinsky is known to have had a lifelong interest in the synthesis of the arts and especially the interaction of music with colours and forms. It is therefore wholly legitimate to consider his frames from the point of view of their relationship to music. His awareness of a close connection between painting and music arose under the influence of the Wagnerian concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and in parallel with the development of his theories of 'non-objective' art. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912), in which he reviews the fundamental elements of painting, he often uses musical examples to substantiate his new theory of the role of colour and form in the perception process. He writes of 'musical images' and compares the 'sound' of different colours with the sounds of various musical instruments: 'light blue is like the sound of the flute, dark blue – the 'cello', 'the sound of dark blue is equivalent to the sound of deep notes on the organ', and so on.[147] In accordance with this, Kandinsky's frames respond to the distinctive musical and painterly harmony of his pictures, lending them a special tone, while picture planes are structured on the basis of a particular colour 'sound'. Frames tune the viewer's perception

of a painting to a particular musical key. In a concrete sense Kandinsky's frames intensify the sensation of rhythm in his paintings, and call to mind the concept of the active pause put forward by Schoenberg in his book *Harmonielehre*.[148] And while the eye views Kandinsky's paintings through a constant of rhythm, listening to Schoenberg's music involves the grasping of a structural 'series' of notes.

Thus the frame of *Evénement doux* (1928) boldly catches the eye and at the same time attunes it to a tranquil 'mode', offering a significant hint at the picture's meaning (illus. 244, 245). The green of the inner frame particularly holds the eye. It was Kandinsky's theory that 'saturated green is the most peaceful of all colours: it doesn't move anywhere and has no hint of joy, of sadness, or of passion.'[149]

244 Wassily Kandinsky, *Evénement doux*, 1928. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



245 Detail of frame.

And only after this pause does the eye proceed to a gradual comprehension of the meaning of the painting, deliberately intended to be 'complex' and 'hermetic'. Kandinsky's frame, then, plays an important role in the perception of his picture and is also an element connected with time, another subject he wrote about.[150] The researches into the fourth dimension and the whole aesthetic atmosphere of the period brought Kandinsky to a new conception of the role of time in the perception of a painting, the time needed to enter its world and grasp its deeper meanings. The structuring of an abstract painting involving time therefore changed the function of the frame. A frame could help the viewer to take in a painting at one glance and could lead the eye gradually and concentratedly to read separate details of the composition, and it could also raise associations and reflections about its content. And ultimately, the absence of a frame could be interpreted as a conscious act of the artist: the limits of the viewer's field of vision would set the edges of the picture plane as of 'the real world'.

Some of these ideas are typical of Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist works. 'I have done one *icon* of my time, bare (as a pocket), *without a frame* . . . [my emphasis]', this painter wrote to Alexander Benua in May 1916 of his celebrated *Black Square* (*Chornyy kvadrat*, 1915, illus. 250).[151] This renunciation of a frame of any kind and the claim of a new transcendental icon as a construct of the human mind meant a complete break with all previous cultural tradition and a declaration of a radically new view of the world. Malevich's starting-point was the icon, but he gave it contemporary guise. As we have seen, the beauty of Old Russian icons had the capacity, in the opinions of Aleksey Shchusev, Alexander Benua and Yevgeniy Trubetskoy, to lead mankind towards mysticism and the ideals of *sobornost'*, or 'communality'. Malevich also aimed at transfiguration, but wanted to achieve it by totally excluding the forms of visible reality. At the heart of his strategy lay an apophatic reductiveness that brought medieval icons and Renaissance images into an axiomatic system, linked with one another by the possibilities of creative experiment. Suprematist forms, therefore, as they took shape to form a progression, displayed solidity and self-sufficiency and did not need a frame to gloss them; they were 'pure forms', axioms, performing the role of a creative principle. At the same time it should be taken into account that Malevich's interest in icons arose on the wave of interest in iconic art and its 'Romantic beauty' that was part of the Russian theurgic aesthetic of the period; during his Primitivist stage he shared the Russian avant-garde's general fascination with the icon as 'primitive painting', an original aesthetic system. The particular features of the avant-garde's preoccupation with the icon are outlined in the artist Aleksey Grishchenko's book *Russkaya ikona kak iskusstvo zhivopisi* (The Russian Icon as the Art of Painting, 1917).

For the Russian 'Neo-Primitives', including Malevich, the Old Russian icon was 'art of the highest order'.[152] Together with other examples of 'primitive' art it offered the opportunity of escape from the academic imitative image to 'pure art'. Henri Matisse, visiting the Ilya Ostroukhov Museum in Moscow in 1911, was in raptures over the beauty of the Old Russian icon, finding it 'genuinely primitive' popular art and a priceless source of new ideas for new Russian painting. Grishchenko maintained that the achievements of

French painters helped the Russian 'Neo-Primitives' acquire a 'new range of artistic concepts' in general and in the field of Old Russian icon painting in particular.[153] For Grishchenko, the greatness of Andrey Rublyov and Simon Ushakov consisted entirely in their painterly technique – in their composition, use of colour, dynamic form, and so on. 'Matisse,' he writes:

> acknowledged that our icon painting is not inferior to the work of Giotto and other painters of the pre-Renaissance such as Duccio and Cimabue. What proof that our masters were pure painters. Twentieth-century Paris finds itself in strange harmony with barbaric Muscovy.[154]

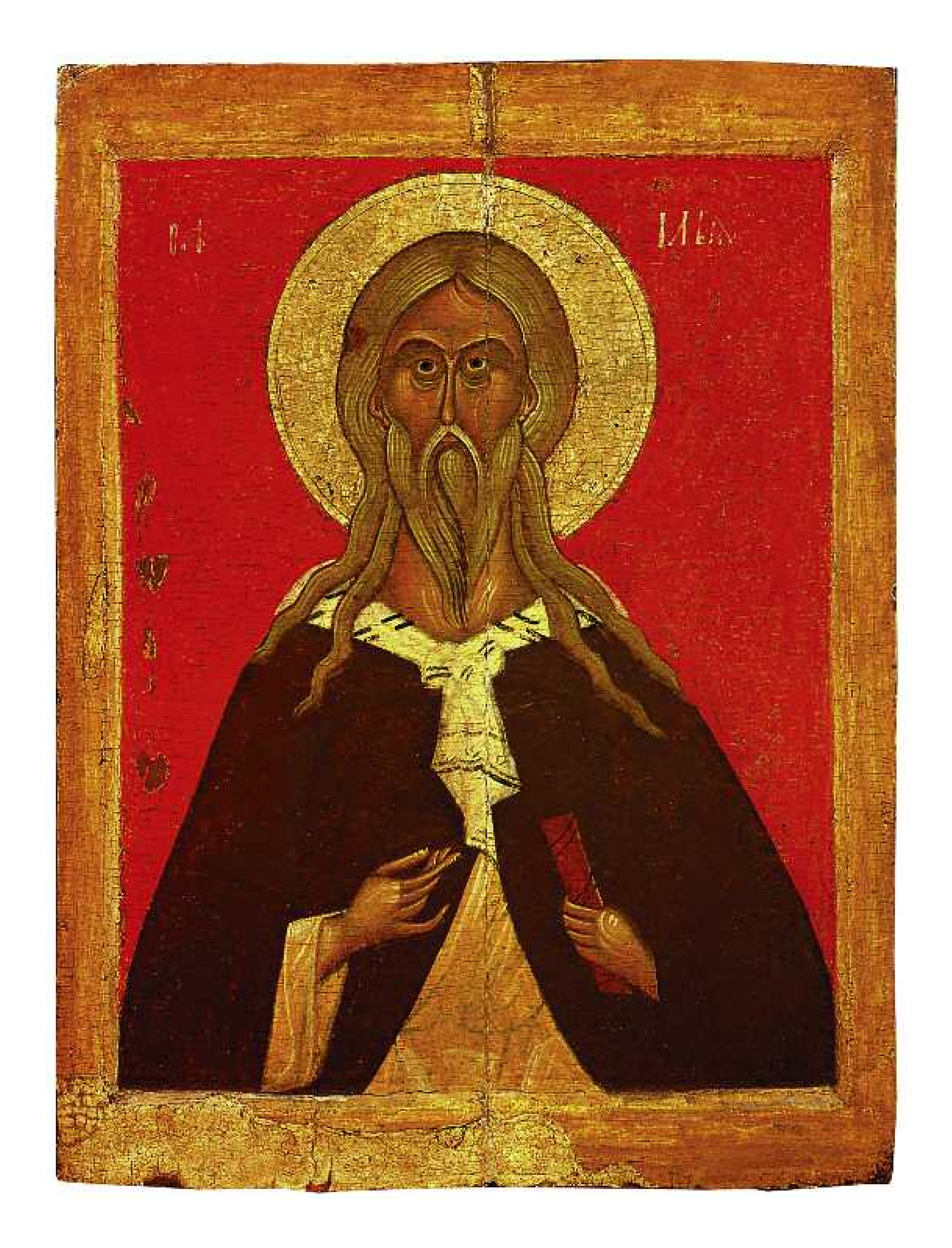
During the period of his interest in primitive art Malevich studied the formal structure of the icon.[155] It was at this stage it became apparent that he was seeking to pass beyond the boundaries of the received aesthetic into the field of metaphysical essences and realities. He wrote later:

> Acquaintance with the art of icon painting taught me that it wasn't a question of studying anatomy or perspective, it wasn't a question of whether nature had been truthfully reproduced – the important thing was a feeling for art and artistic realism. In other words, I saw that reality, or a subject, is what must be re-embodied in an ideal form coming out of the heart of an aesthetic.[156]

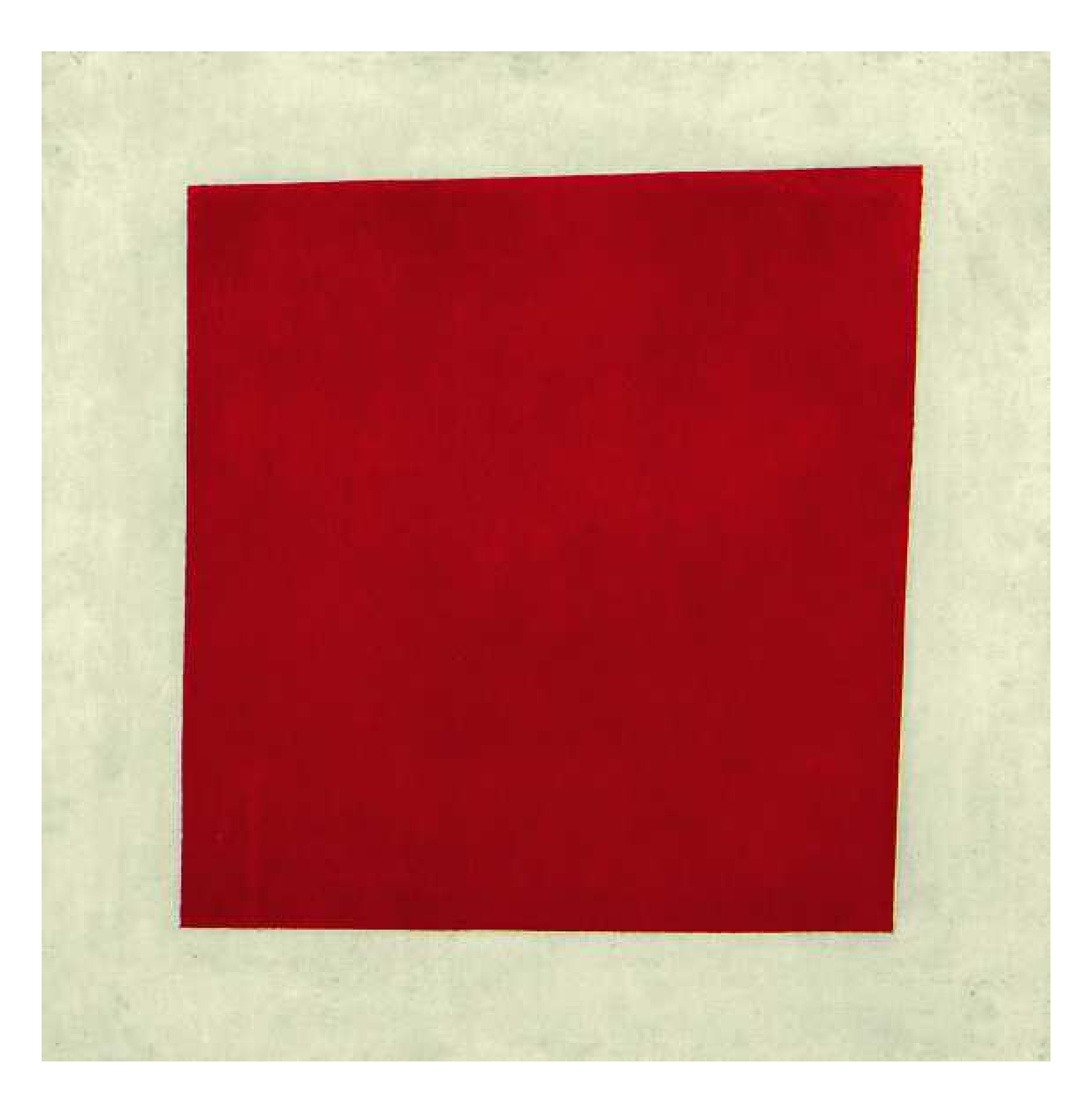
Consequently, the artist transgresses the beauty of the Old Russian icon in order to enter another dimension of reality (illus. 246, 247). He uncovers a transcendental subject to contemplate – absolute nothingness, the potential existence of certain forms, the universal symbol of pure form. He sees his God 'in the absolute, at the ultimate boundary, as it were in non-objectivity. Attainment of the finite is attainment of non-objectivity.'[157]

The composition of a Suprematist painting, therefore, is a view into the meaning of things, achieved through the transformation of 'pure forms' as the primary elements of art. The eye of the viewer of a Suprematist painting falls on a network of the artist's metaphysical experience and visions of boundless, infinite space. Beyond the visible and chance phenomena of our external world there are no laws of harmony, as in Classicism, nor chance clashes, as in Romanticism; there is only infinite emptiness, nothingness. Hence comes the revolutionary transformation of the aesthetic at the centre of which is the viewer's perception of a work of art. Now the personality of the artist himself comes into the foreground.

The Old Russian icon was a canonic image; that is, an authentic revelation, which the icon painter could only depict, not interpret. Renaissance mimetic painting was based on the interpretation of the idea of divine beauty and its reception was dependent on visual perception. But the Suprematist image had arrived at a new threshold, opening onto a different reality. It liberated painting from the figurative yoke, but in contrast to the medieval icon, was a focus for the exercise of personal interpretation. Suprematist painting asserted that in the last analysis the individual is in a unique and profound relationship with the absolute. Hence *Black Square* (*Chornyy kvadrat*), as a new 'frameless' icon, testified to the presence of a direct link with the transcendental – a link the painter himself had experienced. The phenomenon of *revelation*, as in principle a crossing of the uncrossable boundary between the earthly and

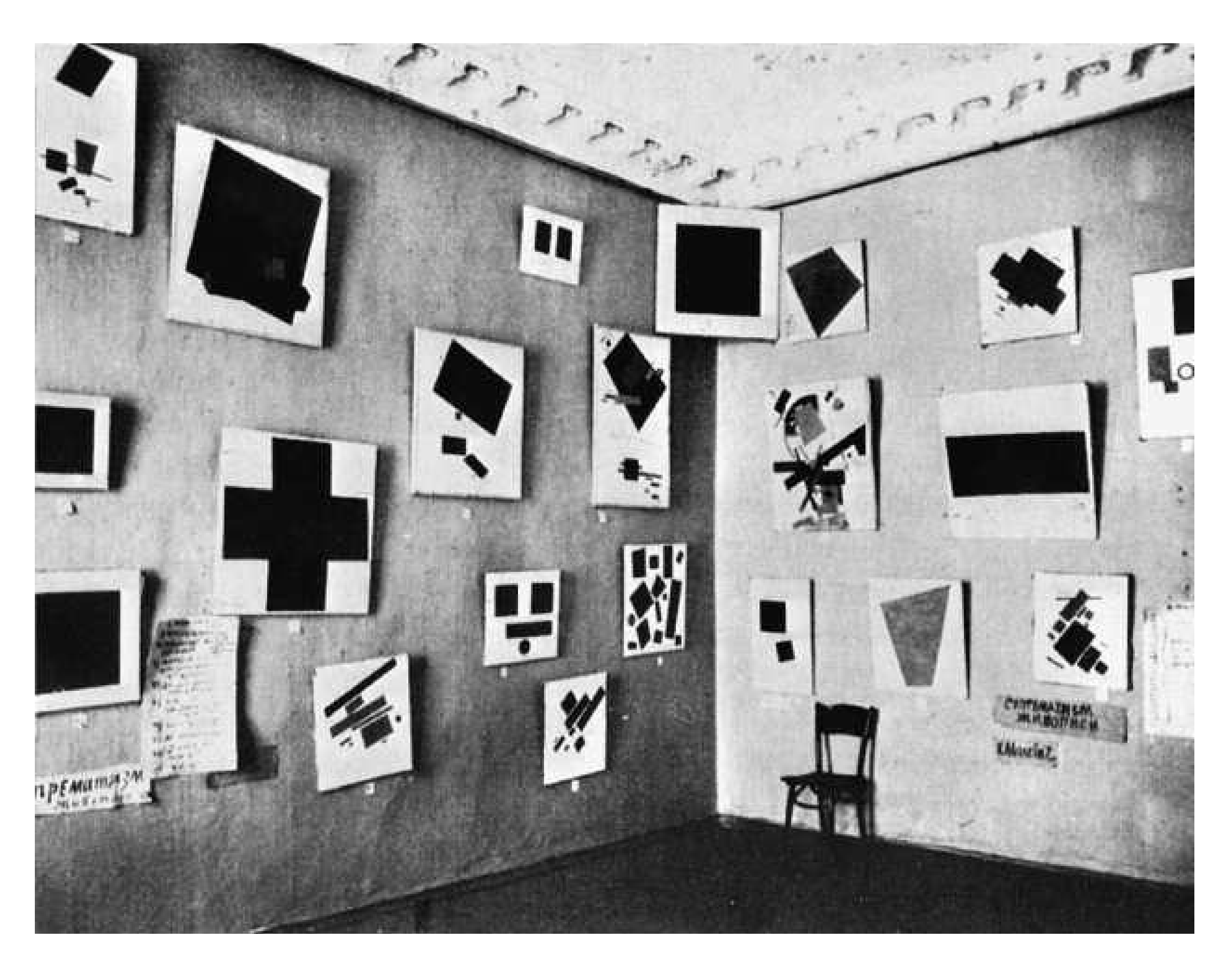


246 *The Prophet Elijah*, 15th century, Novgorod. Collection of Ilya Ostroukhov. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



the divine, traditionally studied by mystical theology, appears here as a palpable example of transgression taken by the artist from cultural tradition. The same could be said of theosophy, which opened up a sensation of other levels of being for Malevich. It was not by chance that this artist noted that his time was 'the age of analysis, the result of all the systems that have ever been established'.[158] The new experience of seeing the transcendental presupposed the mastering of the most diverse practices in art and meditation. Transgression of the boundary into the invisible world not only ensured the openness of the numinous to the metaphysics of the image but also reduced the role of the frame as the recognizable

247 Kazimir Malevich, *Red Square*, 1915.
State Russian Museum, St Petersburg.



boundary of preceding cultures. What was decisive in this transgressive act was that it broke the linearity of cultural evolution by opening up the possibility of so-called negative assertion. The new horizon that appeared as a result of this breakthrough was truly new in the sense that it possessed the status and the energy to disclaim all earlier culture. Such was the meaning of the Cubo-Futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* (*Pobeda nad solntsem*, 1913) in which Malevich collaborated with Aleksey Kruchonykh and Mikhail Matyushin and in which the 'black square' symbol first appeared. '*Victory over the Sun*', Matyushin explained, 'is all about victory over the Romanticism of the past, over the conventional idea of the sun as "beauty". The sun of the old aesthetic was conquered.'[159] The culture of all preceding periods was thereby seen in eschatological perspective. With the 'killing of the sun' it was plunged into chaos, to be mystically regenerated for a new world.[160]

Suprematism was formed and conceived as a spiritual system with a universal cosmic dimension, which was endowed with the capacity to transfigure the world in accordance with the laws of 'pure form'

248 Last Futurist Exhibition *0.10*, Petrograd, 1915: display of pictures by Malevich.

and uncovered the possibility of a reconstruction of being. Such a quest brought the artist into demand as a prophet. He began to feel relieved by his messianic role inasmuch as his creative activity was based on the clear desire to change the organization of the world. Hence *Black Square*, accumulating the artist's creative energy and opening a new world, was intended as a 'new icon', a 'cult object', having an influence on social reality.

Malevich first showed his Suprematist works at the last Futurist exhibition *0.10* in 1915, placing *Black Square* in the corner of the exhibition hall where the icon corner was traditionally set up (illus. 248). This placing of the painting and (as in the case of other works by this artist) the absence of a frame had a conceptual significance. In the artist's words, *Black Square* was 'the zero of forms', 'the face of the new art', 'a royal infant'.[161] And being a self-sufficient form, it did not, of course, need a frame, the long-standing symbolic boundary separating a picture from surrounding space. This work was itself 'reality', cosmic emptiness, frameless, and as such was intended to float in the infinite cosmos and give new form to the real world. It did not even need the narrow canvas surround that emphasized the uniqueness and self-sufficiency of the abstract painting as an aesthetic object, its composition being an enclosed system. The 'framing' effect of the white surround formed a black square, and the square formed the framing, which transformed the whole construction into a 'point', a *fons et origo*, which the artist saw as 'the first step of pure creativity in art'.[162] Here the Suprematist project began to be regarded as a kind of new religion, and a Suprematist painting took on the function of a new form of icon.

Having dispensed with the picture-frame-as-window, Suprematism moved the conceptual frame into the foreground in the form of a theoretical manifesto in which the artist explained the significance of his work. As demonstrated earlier in this book, Vereshchagin's exhibition catalogues served as the immediate context of the works shown. At the exhibitions of the avant-garde, however, artists' explanations began to take as significant a place as the pictures shown, for without them, the process of perception of their work would have lacked any basis of meaning. Thus Suprematist theory had special importance for an understanding of Malevich's work. Beginning with the first Suprematist exhibition and continuing up to his death, he developed and expounded the theoretical basis of the system of painting he had invented. After the October Revolution he divided Suprematism into three stages, corresponding to three squares – black, red and white – which came to stand for the fundamentals of specific views of the world and world orders. Within the framework of mystical experience, these squares were made to give ideal forms to the world, and each was given a concrete meaning: a black square was a symbol of economy, a red one signified revolution, and a white one pure action.[163] Thus from a modest hypothetical level, the artistic idea was *to progress to the level of social existence*.

At the same time, even during Malevich's lifetime this 'idea' gathered distinct connotations for museum display, as may be seen from a photograph of an exhibition of his work held in the Tretyakov Gallery between February and May 1933. Three of Malevich's paintings, including *Black Square*, are shown with gilt frames, while works by Kandinsky and Vladimir Burlyuk have plain narrow frames



such as were often used for pictures of this kind. The gilt frames, as it were, set Malevich's works off from those of other artists shown around them, and emphasized their status as 'museum pieces' (illus. 249). The older type of frame can also be seen in photographs of pictures by Malevich shown in the exhibition *15 Years of Artists of the RSFSR* (*Khudozhniki RSFSR za 15 let*) held in Leningrad in 1932–3. During these years Malevich headed an experimental laboratory at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad, and so played a direct part in organizing exhibitions – and choosing frames for his pictures shown in them, as he must also have done in the case of the 1933 exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery.

We have here an interesting example of avant-garde work being given hints of meaning by an older type of frame. From one point of view, in the context of Malevich's Suprematist theory, claiming to 'purge itself from the accumulation of forms belonging to the past',[164] and also in the context of the artist's criticism of the museum as an institution, *Black Square* in a gilt frame was paradoxical. Rejecting museums and the frame of the mimetic picture, Malevich demanded the rapprochement of art and life and thus continued the line of such

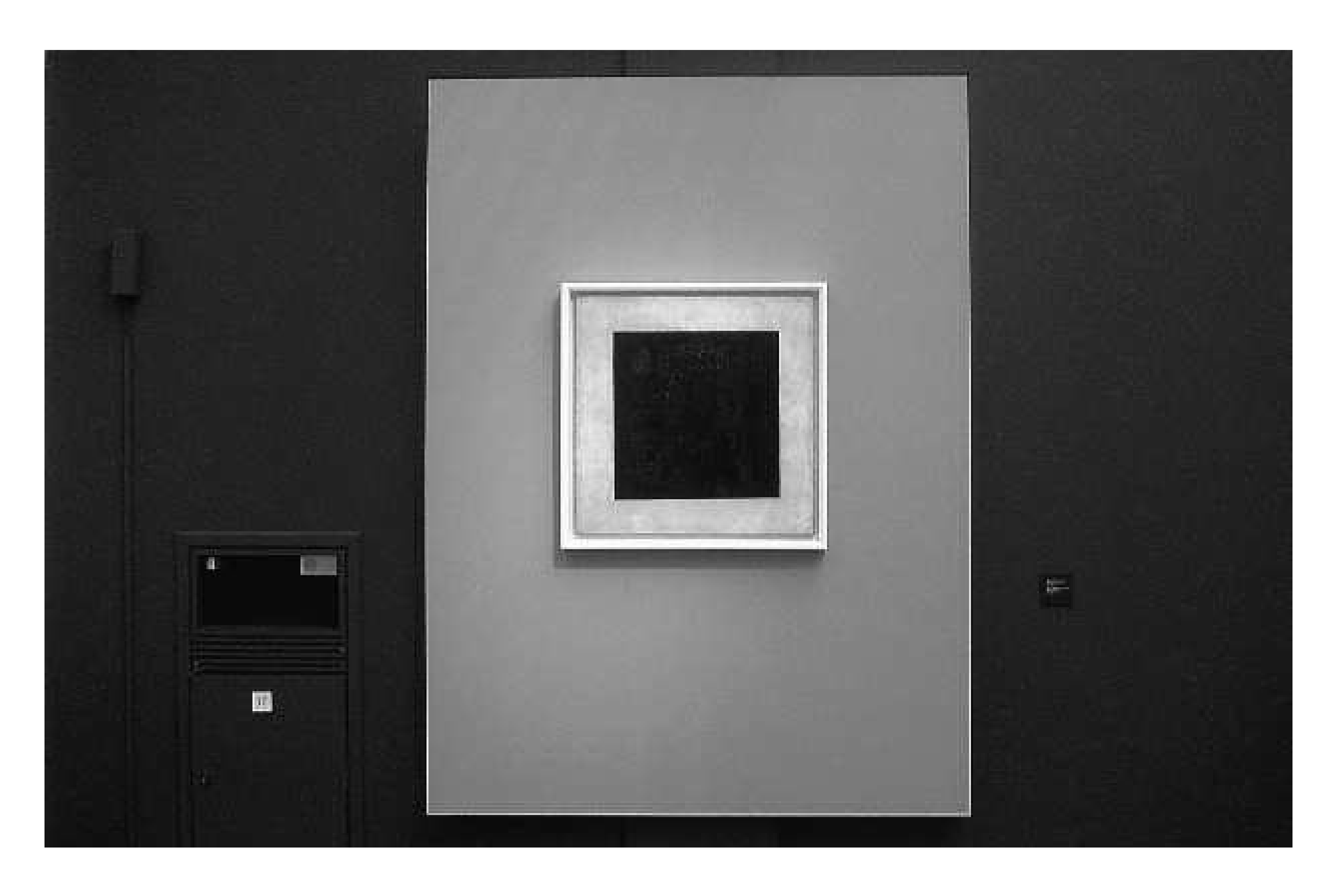
249 Pictures by Malevich, Kandinsky, Vladimir Burlyuk and others in the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1933.

critics of the museum as Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, who maintained that museums aestheticized the perception of cultural monuments and imposed an attitude of passivity towards them. From another point of view, in the context of Malevich's own artistic development (embracing his theory of 'the additional element'), *Black Square* in a gilt frame could be interpreted as a perfectly legitimate phenomenon. Rejecting the traditional museum, Malevich wrote of a new one he had in mind:

> The founding of the Contemporary Museum means collecting contemporary projects, and only those projects which can be used as a framework for life or in which a framework for new forms of it can arise – which can be preserved for time.[165]

And inasmuch as Suprematism was regarded by Malevich as just such a project, it was to acquire honorary 'museum status' in world art history. Hence its creator's pictures needed frames of a 'museum' kind. Furthermore, having sketched the modernistic project of a museum of contemporary art that would be regarded as an institution authoritatively distinguishing between art and non-art, Malevich allotted it the function of a new shrine, with its own apostolic succession beginning with the founder of the new 'teaching' – himself. In other words, his museum was supposed to undertake a revision of history. Although it was never actually built, one of its leading concepts lives on in the white walls of the present-day Moscow Museum of Modern Art – the so-called white cube architecture – emphasizing the immediacy of the viewer's personal contact with the art object as a kind of icon. The white cube setting displays an 'idea' to the world, and creates a sacral atmosphere of asceticism in a social setting in the service of art.

Exhibited in a gilt frame in 1933, *Black Square* naturally ceased to be perceived as a 'novel and real body which makes a direct impact on us'.[166] That, however, is how the work is perceived today in the Tretyakov Gallery, where it is displayed in a glazed frame (reminiscent of an icon case) hung against a grey panel on a black wall (illus. 250). Thus the viewer is invited directly to feel the impact of the painting, as if it were a twentieth-century icon, on the real world. Overcoming the white frame and the grey display panel, the work spreads its colour and energy over the real wall space around it, on which only impersonal numbers and museum labels are visible. In modern museums works displayed have always been wholly capable of living with the newest strategies of art, which focus on its relationship with bourgeois society and for which a museum is the ideal place for debunking dreary cognitive stereotypes. In this context we may remember the empty frame of the Dadaist Francis Picabia (*St Vitus' Dance*, 1920), which diagnosed the 'sickness' of the Renaissance mimetic image and at the same time announced the fact that art was open to any innovation (illus. 251). The artist rejected ideology and welcomed the opportunity of introducing disorder and provocation into the fabric of art. Rejection of the frame too, so definitive of the concept of 'a work of art', was typical of Dada. Since collective evaluation was understood to be a result of social conventions, shutting up a 'work of art' in a museum was declared to be the absurd outcome of ephemeral standards. Le Corbusier observed that a museum possessed

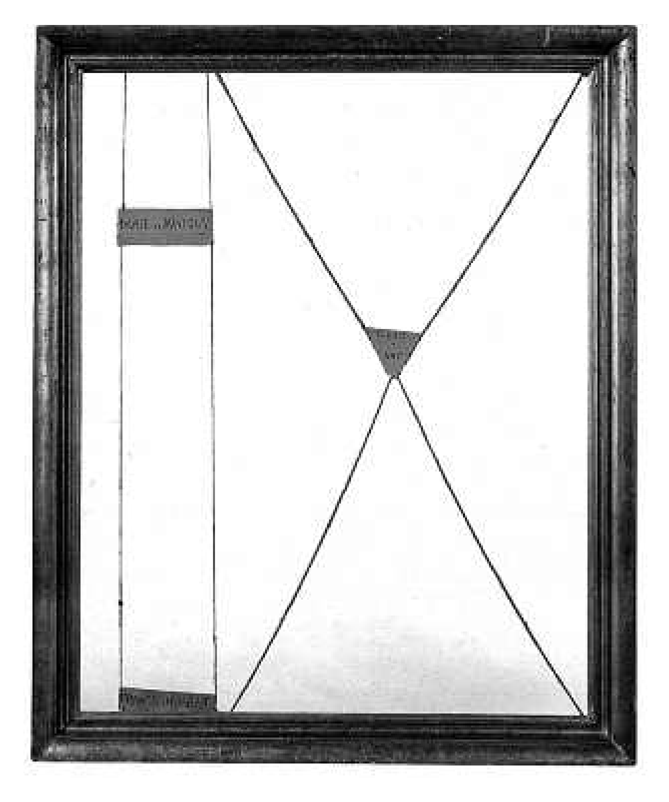


'something sacred, allowing no debate or discussion', while Georges Bataille called the museum 'a grand spectacle for mankind'.[167]

Artists of the present time, therefore, in installations and performances in museums that often develop Dadaist ideas, place the viewer in a cultural metatext producing an awareness of the conventional and rhetorical foundations of the traditional culture. Modern works of art ('ideal objects') are constructed on Absurdist principles and embody an endless journey in quest of meaning. They display a lack of concern for the evaluation of a work of art and focus on the question of what lies hidden under the visible surface of phenomena. A demythologizing process has emerged from the interaction of the framing space of the museum and post-avant-garde texts, involving rejection of preceding cultural experience, and here old frames and museum showcases and labels can be used to parody the principles of creating museum holdings and archives.[168]

In other words, art of the present day shows an inversion of meanings from traditional forms of picture frame to the mobility of perception reflected in modern frames, connected with postmodernist irony and the parodying of the very language of culture. In this conceptual field, games with others' texts (that is, quotations) presuppose an inevitable transformation of the frame. A quotation is often contained in a mental and spatial-temporal framing that orientates perception. This might take the form of the traditional frame-as-window, a photographic

250 Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1915, displayed in the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 2006.



frame, conceptual framing provided by text, a section of framed material from the Internet, or similar. The purpose of all these framing devices is to disrupt old-established paths of communication and redirect the process of perception into a zone of special meditation-like practices aiming to desacralize ideological clichés and myths of mass culture. That is why performances and installations of the present day so often point up the conditions of everyday life in which they are rooted and have their being. Extending the frames of perception, contemporary art stands before us as an untiring unmasker of stereotypes. It also demonstrates the ephemerality of modern cultural constructs, the innumerable theatricalized gestures and installations that are designed for a short life and survive only in the public consciousness. Plunging the latter into a spectral environment, these cultural constructs even transfer the 'frame', which should separate the realm of art from surrounding reality, to that consciousness.[169] The appearance of artistic projects on the Internet and on newspaper pages is tending to overcome the notion of art – that is, to overcome any form of frame that establishes traditional understanding and perception of it. The boundaries of a work of art have been obliterated. Traditional art has been replaced by a fundamentally different culture of visual images.

251 Francis Picabia, *St Vitus' Dance*, 1920. Museum Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

The Antiquary and Dismantlement

During his lifetime, Vasiliy Vereshchagin's exhibitions ended with an auction; so did the exhibition held in the Russian Museum in October 1904, six months after his death. Its design reflected the interior of his studio, gilt frames and velvet background curtains being employed in the display of the late artist's work (illus. 179). Vereshchagin's widow wished to sell the whole contents of the exhibition to the recently founded Alexander III Imperial Museum of Russian Art (now known as the Russian Museum), and to have a permanent memorial exhibition there to include not only his paintings but also objects in his personal possession. In other words, the museum's exhibition of Vereshchagin's work was initially intended to be in the spirit of the famous exhibitions of his lifetime.

However, since auctions always contain an element of risk and give rise to spur-of-the-moment decisions, the contents of the exhibition were sold by lot at the auction, the Russian Museum acquiring only a small number of works. The removal of the artist's paintings, antiquarian and ethnographic objects, furniture and tools of trade from his studio

to the state museum and to private collections brought about the separation of paintings and frames as entities – that is, a new existence for the paintings in new frames. Series of paintings were broken up, frames arbitrarily changed, everyday objects acquired a new status when transformed into symbols of themselves, while antiquarian articles in turn changed their functions. In exhibitions during Vereshchagin's lifetime, objects leaving the artist's studio and entering the exhibition hall played their part in the unity of the exhibition space, providing contextual framing for what was depicted on the canvases. Now their meaning lay in a different order of framing – the subjective partialities of the collector.

The picture frames in the Tretyakov Gallery's store had once belonged to the works of a variety of painters, and in many cases the links were unknown (illus. 252). Now these frames were merely preserved as dead units, hundreds of anonymous objects testifying to a reality that was constantly vanishing, the collisions, ruptures and correspondences of cultural history. The same was true of other museum depositories. Icons and old paintings were relics deprived of their cultural context, surviving after a difficult journey through the centuries, and now appearing on display in deep silence (illus. 253). They had been hidden, with their aura of mystery, from the eyes of the general public in museums' inner sanctuaries. With this absence of context, such works made a powerful emotional impact on connoisseurs, in that they could be perceived without the direction of an exhibition frame, in all their fragmentariness and randomness. Displayed beauty ceased to be a matter of formal organization. The beautiful became formless and chaotic. Historical orderliness gave way to chance, taking the mind away from explicable



252 Frame store in the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 2007.

rationality and into the realm of emotional arousal. Museum holdings could now be interpreted as a reflection of the eternal search for solid meanings.

The episode of the change of frames for two of the paintings in Mikhail Nesterov's *St Sergius* series (1892–9) described earlier is fairly rare in the history of the coexistence of paintings and frames. Changes of taste and fashion have played a much bigger part in the dismantling of pictures and their frames, as well as the processes of formation of private and museum collections, to say nothing of revolutions and other major political events with ideological, economic and social consequences. Hence in the complex history of the relationship between frame and picture, a special intermediary role must be accorded to the antiquary. This figure is not simply the smart, unprincipled dealer who buys cheap and sells dear. He is an admirer of beautiful things, who loves to be surrounded with them in his shop or office; he is also a passionate propagandist for art and therefore a rhetorical figure in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the word; he is someone who must constantly persuade others of the 'use of beauty', always the scholar and collector combined; he is a psychologist, a specialist in human behaviour, able to pick a frame to go with anything; he is constantly changing and correcting his scales of evaluation. The variability, contradictoriness and intangibility of the latter are the result of slight changes in the patterns of his behaviour. The antiquary is a mediator in constantly moving currents, with appearing and disappearing images, on the shifting frontier between the genuine and the false, illusion and reality; and he performs his function sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. All this makes him a magnetic figure in postmodernist and contemporary culturological studies. He is associated with such aspects of the



253 Old Russian icons storeroom, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 2007.

art market as authentication and forgery, auctions and contraband, and finally, he brings a heightened interest to the rhetoric of the picture frame, not infrequently forsaking the realm of scientific research for shady dealings and criminal activities. We encounter not only a genuine old frame with a painting that is a forgery, but also a forged signature and provenance (of unknown origin) and forged museum documents; mistakes by careless 'experts' seeking to gain social footholds as well as slips by serious scholars; and much else. And all this in an antiquary's picture frame! The well-known rhetorical power of the frame to convince those eager to possess a worthwhile work of art only confirms how fruitful it is to study the antiquary's world.

The significance of the antiquary for the understanding of the mutual relationship of picture and frame will be clear from the fact that the first serious interest in the history of the picture frame was shown by one. This was the Venetian businessman Michelangelo Guggenheim mentioned in the Introduction, a collector of frames of the Italian Renaissance period, who traded in antiquities and also produced furniture in period styles. Of the hundred or more Renaissance picture frames that he published in his book on the subject (1897), eleven were in his private collection; the rest were from the collections of other antiquaries, the Berlin Nationalgalerie and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.[170] It would appear that it was Guggenheim's commercial interests that determined his interest in old fabrics and frames, a collection of which he presented to his native city of Venice. It was not coincidental that the second half of the nineteenth century saw widespread use of historical styles in Italian architecture and decorative and applied arts alongside the fashion for collecting old picture frames. Numerous publications on decorative and applied arts appeared around the time when Guggenheim's book appeared.

The emergence of professional antiquaries in Europe was an indication of a new understanding of history, the antiquarian trade in one form or another having always occupied an important place in the history of knowledge. In the Renaissance and Neoclassical periods, for example, it was the antiquary who mediated the enthusiasm for the art of Antiquity. The excavations of Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748) revitalized the antiquarian trade and provided an impetus to fashions based on Graeco-Roman art and a source of inspiration for painters, sculptors and architects. The antiquary also fed the Romantics' passion for the East through the first half of the nineteenth century, when hundreds and thousands of works of art from distant countries reached Europe and found their way into private and state collections and the studios of artists both famous and not so famous, where they served not only as display pieces but also as models for symbolic forms on canvases. The studios of Franz von Lenbach in Munich, Hans Makart in Vienna and Vasiliy Vereshchagin near Paris and in Moscow are only three examples of the numerous West European and Russian artists who were at the same time amateur collectors. The active development of the antiquarian trade in Russia through the eighteenth century took place in conjunction with the country's cultural development at that time and its cultural contacts with the West. The extent to which the Russian antiquarian market not only adopted Western forms but also acquired its own original characteristics at this time is striking.

The antiquarian market the world over has of course always devised a terminology that can reduce everything to the simplest terms – artists' names, names of icons, titles of paintings, cultural-historical periods, and so on. These terms lie, as it were, at the very lowest level of an invisible mental framing of a work of art. On the very level of perception official registers and inventories use this terminology, as also, though in a different way, do reviews of exhibitions. In other words, a special system of naive stereotypes and valuations is being set up here. For example, in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic the art market could call a painting by Jan Vermeer 'Subject with one or two figures';[171] on the Russian art market of the early twenty-first century an icon of *The Three Saints* often continues to bear the title *The Three Pillars*. And we find the same devaluation of the meaning and worth of an image in registers and inventories. A nineteenth-century 'Register of Unallocated Portraits from the Sequestrated Estate of Prince E. Sapega placed in the Storeroom of the Hermitage' included '76 portraits of famous men in black wooden frames', and a 'list of pictures' that Nicholas I in 1853 'allocated to various places and various persons' had an entry 'three silhouettes, glazed and framed'. Of special interest are the nominal names given to different styles of picture frame[172] – Sansovino, Canaletto, Salvator Rosa, Maratta, Lutma – all an established system of terms on the open art market still current today, some of them even in scholarly use. The 'Sansovino' frame, for example, taking its name from the Florentine sculptor Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570), featured decorative motifs typical of his work in the second half of the sixteenth century (illus. 254). In actual fact there were a number of sources for these particular motifs, among them being examples of architectural ornament associated with Michelangelo and Giulio Romano.[173] It is to be noted that some historians of the picture frame accept this terminology without critical comment, others with a reservation about the total absence of documentary evidence that any of these famous artists worked on the

254 'Sansovino' frame, *c.* 1590. National Gallery, London.



frames that antiquaries and collectors used with pictures in their possession.[174]

The same applies in part to the Russian art market. Thus the fairly firmly established term 'Korovin frame' has no documentary source but is based on the oral tradition that this type of frame was favoured by the artist himself or designed by him. In any case, it is far more frequently found with this artist's paintings than any other form of frame (illus. 255, 256). The use of these nominal terms is fundamentally confused. On the one hand, we are to accept that a particular artist played a part in the creation of a particular type of frame – for example, with a sketch, advice or an expressed preference for specific decorative motifs – and on the other, to take into account the characteristics of the processes by which stereotypes are formed on the antiquarian market. Since the value of a picture will be at its maximum if it is in its original frame,



255 Konstantin Korovin, *Paris – Boulevard des Capucins*, 1911. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

256 Detail of frame.

a frame designated with a well-known artist's name will be an important factor in the antiquary's rhetoric in his relations with collectors, in his system of persuasion regarding the uniqueness of the 'masterpiece' he is offering.

Furthermore, the nominal name of its frame suggests some connection with the interpretation of the painting itself. A frame bearing an artist's name always gives rise to more complex levels of interpretation: picture and frame combine more closely in the viewer's mind, with each element of the whole appearing to be of convincing authenticity, each inseparable from the other. As a result of this combination, the original frame may be removed from the picture and replaced by a new one designed on a pattern of stereotypes. Here the subjective will of the antiquary meets the subjective will of the collector, and more broadly, the history of fashion and taste, which has always permeated picture collections from those of tsars to modest devotees'.

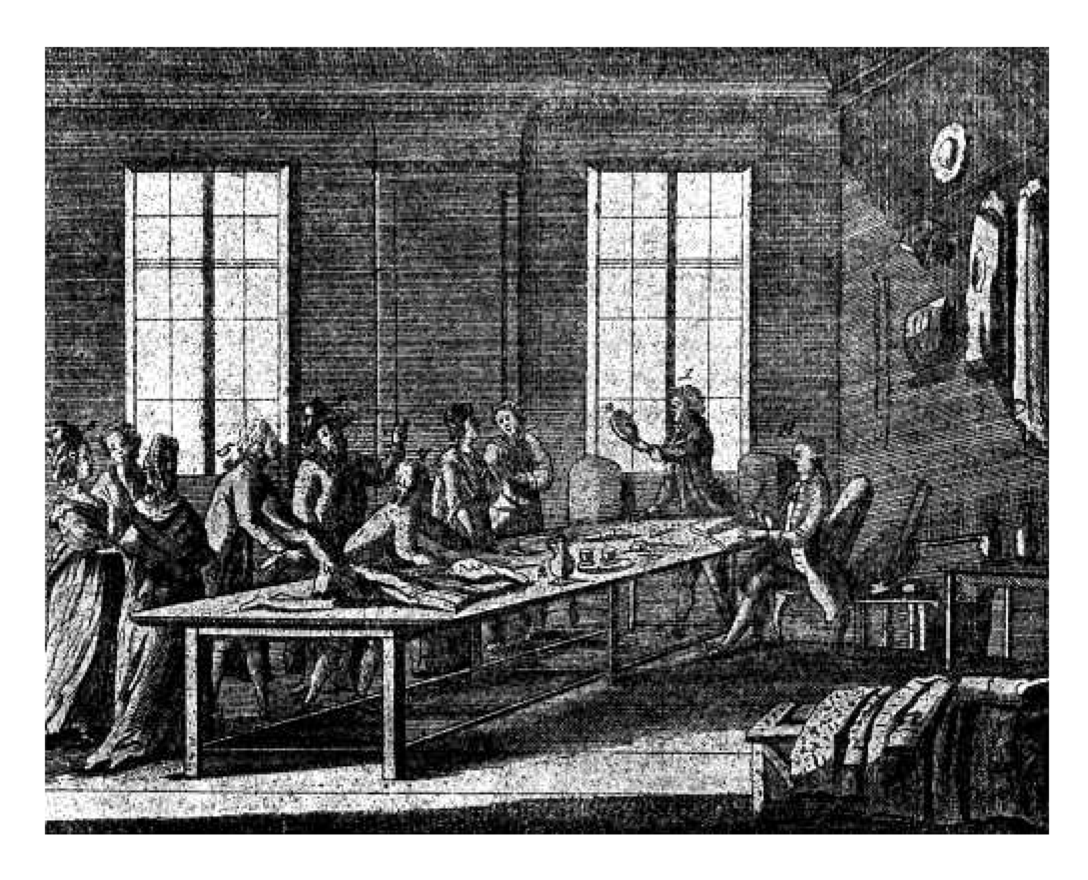
In keeping with the creation of picture galleries in wealthy households from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth, the owners of art treasures did not stint on frames. They took pains to give the jewels of their collections frames worthy of their artistic importance and material value. When, therefore, a Dutch collector of the late seventeenth century or the early eighteenth wished to choose frames for the masterpieces he had bought, he automatically looked to the sumptuous products of France, turning away from the modest frames of the Dutch workshops. Consequently, to this day Rembrandt's paintings are displayed in Baroque gilt frames seldom suited to the characteristics of this painter. Russian tsars, great patrons and collectors did exactly the same, changing the original frames to suit the decorative schemes of their galleries and palaces. Nicholas I would not only put paintings into new frames, but on occasion he went so far as to 'correct' them.[175] When they bought pictures in Western Europe, the Yusupovs and Sheremetyevs freely changed the works' frames when they were placed in their galleries. Conversely, individual paintings could even bring about alterations to interiors. The 'Hubert Robert Rooms' in Prince Nikolay Yusupov's palace at Arkhangel'skoye are celebrated examples of the careful attention that could be devoted to the work of fashionable painters. The Robert Rooms are a most original, freely designed architectural framing for the paintings that the prince most admired: rooms that were originally rectangular were rebuilt octagonally, with walls appropriately redesigned and redecorated. Even the surrounding landscape was redesigned: through the windows a view was to be seen that was reminiscent of the landscapes of the famous painter's canvases. In this way specially designed architectural framing for chosen paintings could embrace various shades of meaning.

Whenever a change took place in the relationship between pictures and their frames, a significant part would invariably be played in the process by the antiquarian auction – a murky area in which changes in frames, in both a material and a conceptual sense, often led to new meanings. Auctions became regular events in eighteenth-century St Petersburg, the most widespread means of sale for works of art (illus. 257). Throughout the year 1737 the *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti* printed an 'inventory of articles in the possession of Prince Kantemir, to be sold at auction', among them 'sacred icons in silver and gilt claddings, pictures printed on paper and paintings in frames'.[176]

The first striking thing that emerges from such announcements is that when paintings changed hands, frames were usually changed. This is made very clear in Gogol's vivid description of the atmosphere of an auction in his tale 'The Portrait':

> A multitude of vehicles large and small stood before the porch of the house where an auction was taking place of articles from the house of one of those wealthy amateurs of the arts who gently slumber through their entire lives, immersed in zephyrs and cupids, who have in all innocence acquired reputations as great patrons after simple-heartedly spending millions accumulated by their judicious forefathers and sometimes even by their own labours. Such patrons, as everyone knows, do not exist any more, and our nineteenth century has acquired the boring physiognomy of the banker, enjoying his millions merely in the form of figures displayed on paper. The long hall was packed with a variegated assembly of visitors who had swooped down like raptors on a body left to the elements. There was a whole flotilla of Russian merchants from Gostinyy dvor [Merchants' Yard] and even the flea market in dark-blue German frock-coats. Their appearance and facial expression was rather harder, freer and without that pretended obsequiousness so evident in the Russian face when in its own shop in front of customers. Here they did not stand on ceremony, despite the presence of a number of aristocrats, before whom, in another place, they would have been ready to sweep away the dust deposited by their own shoes with their deep bows. Here they were completely unbuttoned, handling books and paintings quite unceremoniously, eager to know the worth of the articles, and they boldly outbid the aristocratic connoisseurs. Here were many compulsive auction-goers who each day decided to forego breakfast to attend the occasion; well-to-do connoisseurs who felt obliged not to miss an opportunity to add to their collection and had nothing else to do between twelve and one; and finally, those noble persons of very meagre dress and pocket who appeared daily without any mercenary aim but simply in order to observe how things would end, who would offer more, who less, who would outbid whom, and who would make the successful bid. Masses of pictures were thrown about without rhyme or reason together with articles of furniture and books bearing the monogram of their previous owner, who perhaps even lacked the commendable curiosity ever to have glanced at them. Chinese vases, marble table-tops; new and antique furniture, curvilinear, with griffon, sphinx and lion's paw ornament, with and without gilding; chandeliers, old oil lamps – all piled up in a way they would not be in shops. It all amounted to a chaos of the arts. In general, we experience terrible feelings at auctions; everything about them is reminiscent of a funeral ceremony. The hall in which an auction takes place is always gloomy; the windows, blocked up by furniture and pictures, let in limited light, and there are the silent faces and the funereal voice of the auctioneer banging his hammer and chanting a requiem for the poor arts so strangely brought together here.[177]

This literary text (though not very far from reality) contains some interesting points for



analysis. What is the attraction of the auction in the context of a picture frame? In the first place, the auction clearly serves as a marginal cultural phenomenon – Gogol's 'chaos of the arts', where the framing and perception of the idea of beauty are subject to sudden change. Thus, an article put up for auction has to please a new owner. Consequently, at this first stage of a picture's changing hands, a serious reason arises to change a 'wrong' frame for a 'right' one. In this process a work of art for sale can acquire not only a new material frame but also a new frame of meaning: the picture will be accompanied by its provenance either in the form of a document or oral testimony. The latter can be based on the conclusion of a well-known or a less well-known expert whose opinion passes as authoritative in some circles but is subject to doubt in others depending on what conventions are followed. That is to say, everything constantly moves away from the view that seeks to be objective.

Secondly, the persons involved in the conduct of an auction are worth analysis, and above all the auctioneer, whom Gogol does not omit to mention. It might seem that his status should be lower than that of the antiquary in the historical and cultural context of early trading in antiquities. However, in the deconstruction of the system picture–frame he has a definite role to play. The timbre and intonation of his voice, his gestures, even his physical appearance, can be decisive in an auction's success or failure. He performs like the conductor of an

257 'Auction', from the engraved series *Spectacles of Nature and the Arts* (St Petersburg, 1788).

orchestra, communicating the experience of a work of art to the audience in that fleeting moment when it moves from one point in space to another. But he is 'cool-headed', 'objective' and 'neutral'. He is a human mask, an actor on the antiquarian world's stage of illusion and reality and an invisible man in the world of art, inasmuch as his task is confined to the marking of the change of location of a work of art. The audience and buyers at an auction behave differently from how they would at an exhibition, in a museum or in a theatre. And here Gogol's observations help to elucidate further aspects of social psychology and perception theory.

Alongside the auction, another important field potentially fruitful for current studies of marginal cultural phenomena is contraband. The definition of contraband in works of art was clarified in Russia in 1918 with the emergence of the first law setting out regulations on the antiquarian trade and the transportation of national treasures across frontiers.

When any new law comes into force, however, circumventive measures will immediately be found. Such was the case with contraband in art, which has always and everywhere involved alteration of the external appearance of an art object, and above all the removal of the existing frame from a painting, in the course of which the stretcher too might be lost, cut down or even slit. Icons are in the same case. The famous icon *St Nicholas of Mozhaysk with Scenes from his Life* (1560s; Novgorod), now in the collection of the National Museum of Stockholm, was sawn into a number of separate pieces when transported abroad, which substantially changed viewers' perception of it. A large number of such cases is known. In other words, the topic of auctions and the antiquarian market brings up a whole range of new problems concerning the effect of the framing of visual images, and the problem of expert authentication of a work of art, which plays such a key role today, is one of them. Such authentication is a *conceptual* or *cognitive* framing of a work of art, containing supplementary meanings of a social, political or economic kind.

Love of the old, of antiquarian objects, of history, can turn into a passion for simulation and falsification, which can confront the researcher with the problems of authentication and forgery. To this day Russian culture is cemented by a system based on knowledge as power, consisting of age-old methods used by the state to identify and control its citizens. This system includes a register of individuals and their names, documents with specific notes and stamps testifying authenticity, photographs – all impossible to falsify. A simplified form of this system is used in the world of museums and the art market, inasmuch as the falsification of a work of art, in a declaration of its legitimacy, statement of its aesthetic quality or its display in a state museum, involves a serious threat to the proprietary institution and its authorities.

The problem of imitation of Old Russian icons in the context of Old Believer culture has been touched on by the present writer elsewhere.[178] The present topic is their reception. Here it is not individual cases of authentication that are of interest – in this field specific procedures are used to distinguish fakes from originals. The problem consists in the lack of theoretical clarity about the phenomenon of authentication itself and the impossibility of considering it in isolation from the culture of its own time and the historical processes of dissemination of the meanings and cultural significance of

any particular work of art. If the latter is to be duly taken into account, it is clear that authentication is to be seen not merely as an 'objective specialist view' but also as a cultural phenomenon linked by innumerable invisible threads with a given system of knowledge and specific forms of social psychology, political and economic interests and even ideological doctrines and concepts.

Nelson Goodman, in *The Languages of Art*, some time ago observed that 'fakes of works of art are an unpleasant problem for the collector, the museum curator and the art historian', inasmuch as the question of the authenticity of the language of a work of art has hitherto remained unclarified on a theoretical level. Thus 'the philosopher who is taken unawares by the question of the aesthetic difference between a fake and an original finds himself in the same ridiculous position as the art historian who takes a van Meegeren for a Vermeer.'[179] All this indicates that at present levels of technological development, the old aesthetic criteria for detecting the authenticity of a work of art can at times turn out to be ineffective. An ever-increasing part of the process of authentication is played by an art object's provenance and its reliability.

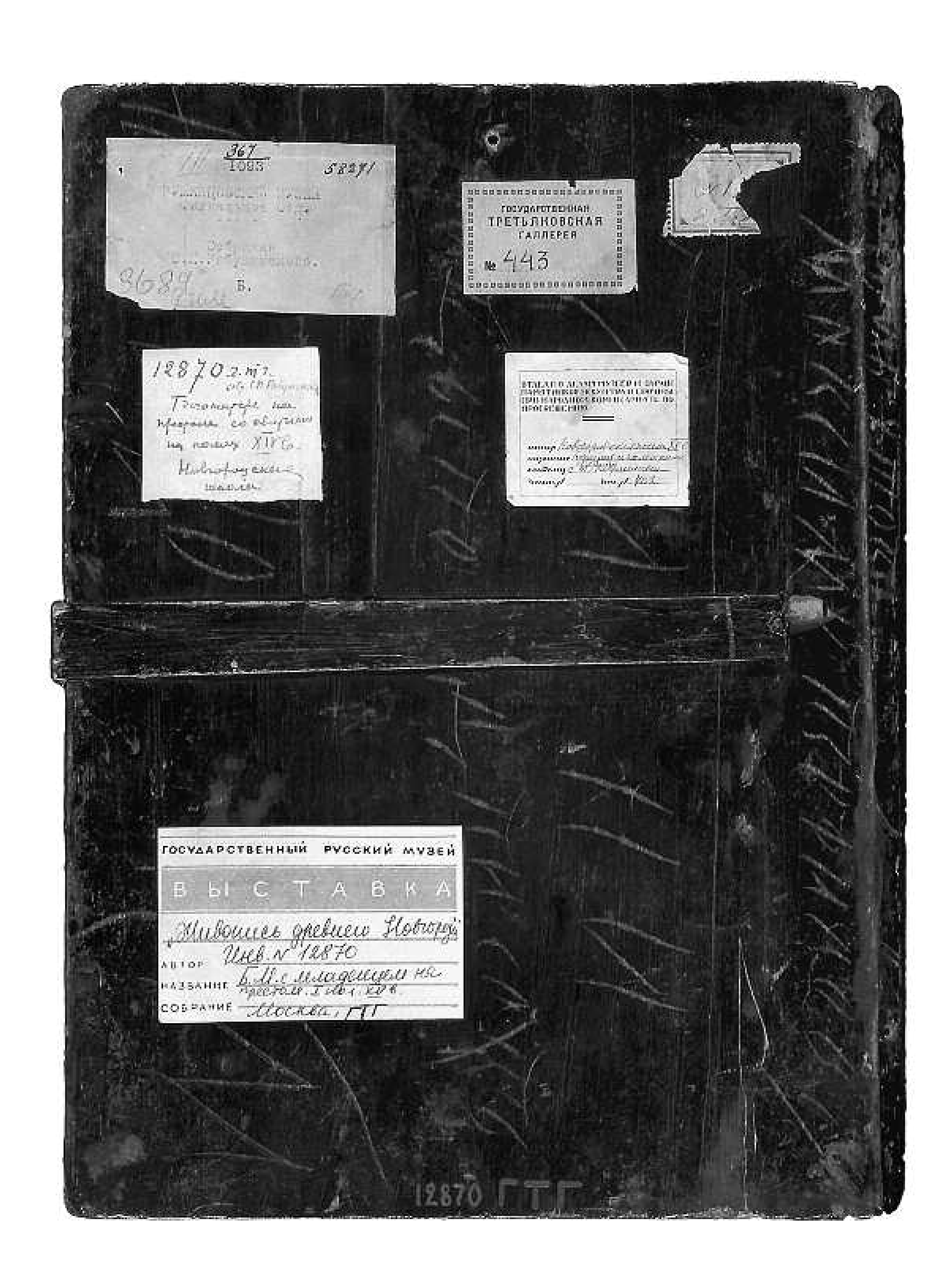
An example of the theoretical complexity of the aesthetic criteria for establishing authenticity is shown on museum labels on the backs of icons, which might be considered to be the most intimate context of works of art since they serve as a kind of documentary framing. Thus in the nineteenth century, labels attached to the reverses of Old Russian icons by their owners could perfectly well serve as the chief criterion for confirming their authenticity. It is known that in preparing the catalogue of Porphiry Uspensky's famous collection of icons from Sinai at the Kiev Church Academy, the founder and curator of its museum, N. I. Petrov, relied on information given on the reverses of the icons.[180]

The situation changed in some respects at the beginning of the twentieth century when methods of restoring early icons were discovered as a result of the activities of a new generation of collectors, including Ilya Ostroukhov (1858–1929), Stepan Ryabushinsky (1874–1943) and Aleksey Morozov (1857–1934). Cleansing methods using new technology first posed fundamental questions as to the authenticity of the forms of early monuments and foregrounded the aesthetic criterion for the establishment of their historical origins. From this point on, scholars and collectors looking at early icons began to be guided by stylistic characteristics and also by the criterion of 'authenticity' of form, even if colour and composition had been altered to suit the tastes of 'antiquarian restoration'. It has been established that a 'restoration' specialist, without consciously aiming at forgery, could remove the background colour in early icons, make new inscriptions and complete lost parts of images. He could entirely repaint an icon to suit the tastes of a client or represent an imagined 'authentic' form. In other words, 'restoring' icon painters working for Ostroukhov or Ryabushinsky essentially sought to eliminate all correlation between a 'forgery' and an original early icon: to them, absolute unreality, making the real concur with the simulation, was of the same value as the real thing. The most important consideration for us today, the difference between a forgery and an original, was not so in early twentieth-century eyes.

In the 1910s this situation became more complex. For the first time in the history of the Russian antiquarian icon trade, the problem of *conscious forgery* arose, which turned out to be



258 *The Mother of God Enthroned, with saints on the margins*, 15th century, with early 20th-century restorations. Collection of Stepan Ryabushinsky. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



259 Reverse of *The Mother of God Enthroned.*

closely connected with the invention of new technology, the swing away from iconographic to formal methods of analysis of works of art, and a widening of the market in and demand for early icons, especially of the Novgorod style. The new technology at the disposal of the creator of fakes made the original 'better' than all that history could do, in accordance with the aesthetic criteria of authenticity put forward by Russian specialists at the beginning of the twentieth century. And the fact that authentication of similar-looking icons was often made on the basis of an imitated form rather than an original one is often confirmed by labels on the reverses of icons.

The icon of *The Mother of God Enthroned, with saints on the margins* (*Bogomater' na prestole, so svyatymi na polyakh*) is a case in point (illus. 258, 259). Judging by the labels on its reverse, this icon belonged first to Stepan Ryabushinsky and was subsequently acquired by the Rumyantsev Museum. After the October Revolution it fell into the possession of the Department of Museums and Preservation of Works of Art and Cultural Monuments under the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, and lastly it was acquired by the Tretyakov Gallery. The provenance of the icon is reflected in the varying datings given on the labels: fourteenth century, first half of the fifteenth century, simply fifteenth century.

The level of distortion of the original resulting from 'antiquarian restoration' can be clearly appreciated in the case of the icon of *St George Slaying the Dragon* (*Chudo Georgiya o zmiye*) from the Aleksey Morozov Collection (mid-fourteenth century, illus. 260). It was acquired by the Tretyakov Gallery at the beginning of the twentieth century and is now in the permanent collection. The icon's state of preservation is thus described in the museum's catalogue:

> Losses from the original painting; significant amount of restoration over the whole paint surface. The outlines of the horse, the cave, and wings and head of the dragon are emphasized in thick black paint. Whitening on the garments has been lost. The outlines of the hillocks are disfigured; on the right, traces of small ledges are visible. The inscriptions and vermilion colour of the border are added. The original colour of the background and borders appears to have been light yellow. The halo has been coloured. The representation of Golgotha and the inscription on the upper border are later additions.[181]

Today's researches more and more frequently reveal that in early twentieth-century 'antiquarian restoration', an imitation does not simply reproduce an original but tries to improve on it, while the historical original vanishes from the specialist purview. And it vanishes not simply because 'no one saw it', but because this 'original' is nothing other than a historically established system of conventions between the restorer, the scholar and the collector. Hence the question might rather be not the reproduction, in an old icon after 'restoration', of 'genuine' original features, but a conceptual representation achieving only approximation to the original.

Here lies the reason, in the present writer's view, why the problem of forgery increasingly disturbs art historians. The identification of the artist and establishment of place and date of execution frequently turn into heated specialist discussion. What is perhaps



260 *St George Slaying the Dragon*, mid-14th century, with early 20th-century restorations. Collection of Aleksey Morozov. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

most striking in this situation, however, is that despite constantly improved methods of authentication (involving the results of physical and chemical analyses, new technology, new research on style and iconography), the number of decisions based on disputed interpretations rather than concrete fact surprises specialists themselves. In most cases there is no final conclusion; the outcome always depends on the nature of the interpretation, which is simultaneously a process and a result. The presence of a philosophical problem here is not often evident. The attempt to determine the difference between an original and a forgery or copy, particularly on an aesthetic level, sharply contradicts today's general practice and theories of identity. Aesthetic feelings often count for nothing in comparison with the system of intellectual aims and social conventions from which the expert takes his benchmarks for the object of his analysis. And it is not so easy for the expert to break out of this system, because it is precisely this that provides us with a cognitive frame through which we perceive and understand reality. By means of stylistic examination of a work of art the expert can perceive a given original only because he or she is pre-equipped with a particular supply of expectations through which he gains access to the world of a period of art history that is familiar to him. Our reading of 'the cryptograms of art', as E. H. Gombrich has noted, is always conditioned by our expectations. When we approach a picture, we are already in the same mode as the artist, our apparatus of perception is synchronized. We are tuned, as it were, to a particular way of seeing an image.[182] The specialist, therefore, tends to see physical art objects through a network of general meanings and stylistic characteristics. He is following a particular system of conventions, and such objects have for some time been merged in his consciousness with their stereotypical representations, so that it is impossible for him to make authentications with one hundred per cent certainty. Hence we find ourselves time and again confronted with the problem of the conditional nature of our vision, in the light of which the frame of perception, in all its historical forms and modifications, is the ontological basis of our definition of authenticity. The concept of a frame always reminds us of our own lives in a world surprisingly difficult to comprehend and increasingly improbable. In this, evidently, lies its never-ending historical role and its meaning.

Conclusion

The foregoing consideration of framing in the context of Russian art will have led us to conclude that it plays a very important part in the structure of our dialogue with the world. The frame is not only a cognitive stereotype but also a fascinatingly multifaceted cultural phenomenon that has had a number of changing functions. Throughout this book, therefore, we have returned time and again to the way in which changes in spiritual life have been reflected in formal changes in picture frames; and so the frame has been paid special attention as a cultural-historical phenomenon. In earlier centuries it assumed a modest aspect linked to religious symbolism. The medieval icon did not presuppose transition from this world to the next. Consequently, its frame constituted an almost impenetrable barrier between the sacred and the secular, outlining an ideal space affording a view of man's relationship with God in which the idea of protection and concealment of the sacred image was to the fore. This was the meaning of the frame-as-ark of early icons, the construction of which became widespread following the end of the Icono - clast period of the eighth and ninth centuries, when the demand arose in Christian art for a conclusive eradication of the illusionism of late antiquity. The ineffable otherworldliness of the icon was emphasized by a frame that was an impassable barrier between the realm of heavenly forms and the world of man. The leaves of Russian and Western medieval manuscripts speak of just such inaccessibility, bearing in the margin (that is, on the 'frame' of the sacred text) various drawings, notes and inscriptions relating to everyday life that in the copier's mind bear no relation to the Gospel text. The architecture of Byzantine and Old Russian churches, with the severity of their exteriors and the striking beauty of their interiors, bears witness to the same principle.

Simplifying and schematizing an enormous amount of material, the author of this book regarded it as important to show that, with the appearance in Muscovite Rus' of Western European Latin rhetoric and Renaissance aesthetics, a hitherto strict and impassable barrier suddenly became less so, which brought a number of cultural-historical consequences in its train. The main aim was to show how the typical frame of the Russian icon of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries gradually changed from a means of preserving a sacred image into an instrument of cognition. And to anyone looking at icons, books and albums of engravings, or to the

visitor of a Russian seventeenth- or eighteenth-century church, the extraordinary diversity of framing forms is not only striking to the imagination but also brings out the individual ways in which Russian icon carvers discovered the forms of Western European picture frames. It is noteworthy that this was even possible, but it is of the greatest interest in widening the horizon of historical investigation. Hence the attempt was made to see the frame of a religious image as a special cultural stratum containing a space in which man was constantly conducting a dialogue with God. Indication of this was found in sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine icons with frames bearing inscriptions, clients' names and prayers, and also depictions of the patron saints of those who commissioned the icons. An icon frame of this kind could be interpreted as an 'envelope' containing a message from man to God. It bore, indeed, the client's name – a shadow of the name of his saint living in heaven. Putting his own name on the frame, therefore, the client who bought the icon would place himself under God's observation, while in putting a depiction of his patron saint on the frame he transformed the latter into a special meeting place where his saint could be seen to commune with God. His gaze would constantly alternate between the face of his saintly intercessor on the frame and the central image, so becoming involved in that special dialogue with the image that is dictated by the very construction of the icon board.

These and similar fairly straightforward observations led to the conclusion that the framing of icons could bear particular cultural-historical meanings and reflect the most diverse changes in the spiritual life of societies. Hence the gradual disappearance of the medieval ark form of icon and its replacement by a picture frame could not fail to signify profound changes in the system of popular values. These developments coincided with a change in the design of the iconostasis in Russia and the opening up of the altar space produced by modifications to the design of 'holy gates', which in turn coincided with the opening up of the walls of Baroque churches as a result of the widening of window apertures and also with the filling of margins of books of the Baroque period with references to and learned commentaries on biblical texts rather than notes on everyday events. What was emphasized in all these Baroque forms of framing was the unity of all living things in God, and their 'permeability' began to reflect the idea of the immanence of divine grace. It is not coincidental that in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Russian icons saints are so often depicted 'walking out of the frame'. Moreover, this movement of saints towards the world was further brought out by the increased size of the stamps on the frames of domestic icons and also by the increasing frequency of separate painted frames round old images, and especially those accounted 'miracle-working', which now, rather than protecting a sacred object from the eyes of the uninitiated, sought to disseminate it to a wider public, to make it known throughout the world of man. Icons and frames of this kind are found in great numbers, and no purpose would have been served by detailed enumeration of them. What was important was to note their ubiquity, analysing only typical examples.

In the Renaissance and Baroque periods the formerly monolithic and static structure of the cosmos acquires the impulse towards movement: the frame becomes distinct from the image because

the world itself became separated on the way to self-knowledge. Hence the picture frame of seventeenth-century Muscovite Rus' opens up an astonishing panorama of the imagination in which religious experience goes side by side with scientific knowledge. A culminating example of this approach is to be seen in one of the most extraordinary pieces of icon framing that ever existed – the iconostasis of the Moscow merchant Grigoriy Shumayev. Analytical study of its allegorical symbolism showed that its formal design and its treatment of space derive from leading features and formulae of the Baroque. A variety of figures 'ornamenting' the frame are visual expressions of particular meanings current in artistic, theological and even folkloric and political tradition. In the context of the continuity of these traditions, the frame gives a multi-layered understanding of the image as autonomous mimetic art. The function of the frame of a visual image in the Baroque period – colophon, painting or icon – was to widen the scope of its meaning. Thus it became laden with supplementary symbols, which could be understood only by those familiar with manuals of symbols, emblems and allegories. In contrast to the modest medieval icon frame, the Baroque frame made levels of perception more complex and added shades of meaning to the image. In as far as Baroque metaphor took away the isolation of the depiction, the image became closely linked with surrounding realities.

At the same time, it was essential to note that in the Baroque period efforts were made to make icon frames look like not only theological but also aesthetic commentaries. This trend emerged with the distancing of the material frame from the image in Muscovite Rus', and was caused by the appearance of 'applied aesthetics' of the Renaissance type, embodied especially in the aesthetic treatises of Simon Ushakov, Iosif Vladimirov and other artists. This new aesthetic theory comes to us from Western European rhetoric, which dictated new rules for constructing and perceiving a literary text. Western influence on Russian culture had been observed for a long time. Thus the wall of the Moscow Kremlin, built in the fifteenth century by Italian architects, is perhaps the grandest Western-style framing of a sacred monument in Russian medieval culture. The key point is that only with the impact of Western-Latin rhetoric is it possible to speak seriously of the appearance of a fundamentally different culture of visual images in Russia, and consequently of the picture frame as a sign of a new, secular form of art. It was essentially Baroque aesthetic theory, therefore, that first confronted the Russian icon painter with the problem of visual perception. In order to show this, it was necessary to touch on the idea of artistic invention in the context of the fundamentals of rhetorical doctrine. Only after establishing the distinction between medieval copying of models and the new European method of creating pictures was it possible to clarify all those compositional and stylistic forms that flooded into Russian icon painting in the second half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth. From this period, Russian religious and secular art came into active mutual contact, with free exchange of methods and discoveries. The high point of this process was perhaps reached in the religious paintings of the artists of the *stil' modern* period, in Vasnetsov's and Nesterov's conception of the new Russian icon, when the idea of the 'beautiful' acquired a moral quality deriving from Russian theurgical aesthetics – springing in turn from the ideas of Friedrich

Schelling and Vladimir Solov'yov – which brought church and museum together in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 'The museum as a church' may have shortcomings as a working metaphor, but it helps to bring out significant changes in Russian spiritual life. It was important, therefore, in discussion of changed ways of displaying icons in museums, to take into account how such displays were influenced by philosophy, political situations, ideology, religious experience, and, of course, current scientific ideas and knowledge. It was possible to explore only one of a number of aspects of the exhibition as a spatial frame guiding the process of perception, nevertheless a very important one, in that its study revealed the hidden sanctity of museum interiors, where the viewer not only felt drawn closer to 'high' art but was also included in the very process of cultural history, becoming an involuntary contemplator of works of art as objects of cultural-historical specialist knowledge.

It was necessary, of course, to be clear about how the rhetorical principle was realized, not only in icons but also in imperial portraits and secular paintings. All three areas were found to display the same movement towards graphic and convincing clarity and a more and more active impact of visual images on the perceiving mind. The example of Repin's painting *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Leaders of the Volosts in the Courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace, Moscow* afforded the opportunity of observing the indissoluble link between the frame of the palace painting and not only the artist's depiction but also palace architecture and ornament and even palace ritual. It is not, therefore, incidental that so much attention was paid to the contemporary viewer's perception of this frame. It explained a whole complex of questions relating to the central significance of the palace picture frame as an intimate part of the process of the creation of state mythology. This in turn led to a comparison between Repin's picture and *Lenin Speaking at the Third Komsomol Congress* from the studio of Boris Ioganson, which clearly showed how changes in state ideology can bring about changes in the rhetoric of paintings, especially portraits, and their frames, including their place of display. It would, of course, have been possible to give further examples and analysis. However, individual problems could best be identified by reference to a general context, which, if it did not produce complete explanations, could at least bring out the cultural-historical significance of the framing, in the widest sense, of a figure of power. It was therefore important to simplify the vast and heterogeneous material and reduce it to fundamentals that could be read to make historical sense.

It has often been pointed out that the emergence of the portrait in art history reflects the evolution of individualism. It is no less interesting that the portrait frame reflects the same thing. Thus seventeenth-century icon frames merely sacralized an existing model on tomb portraits in the Cathedral of the Archangel in the Moscow Kremlin, signalling that these should be perceived as religious images. Gradually, the frames of Russian palace portraits acquired the function of glorification of their subjects. The rhetoric of their ornament was linked to the characteristics of state mythology. Under Western European influence, the frames of Russian palace portraits from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth acquired coats of arms, regalia, monograms, accessories of all kinds, allegorical representations of heavenly powers and much else.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that viewers necessarily paid much attention to ornamental details of the frames of the paintings they looked at – rather, these would have been discreetly camouflaged by surrounding palace decor. An adequate account of all this required some explanation of the details of title and ritual.

From the era of Peter the Great up to 1917, the titles of emperors and aristocracy were presented visually in an extraordinary variety of decorative and ornamental treatments that evolved within the panegyric tradition. Hence the symbolic ornament of Repin's ceremonial painting of *Alexander III* is to be interpreted not only in terms of ideas and images of Moscow as the Third Rome. It is also a visual representation of the extended title of the Emperor of Russia. Furthermore, this title, expressed in a frame laden with regalia and trophy ornament, turned out to be linked not only with the triumphal idea but also with that of continuity of power. The author considered it important to bring out this link fully because it is just such features of the picture frame that have led to important new insights into the problem of visual perception and made it a widened field for research in recent years. Consideration of trophy ornament on a frame, for example, revealed the interaction between the central image of a painting or engraving and its frame ornament, particularly striking in the case of a widely disseminated image used – especially in engravings – as an instrument of mass propaganda, in order to instil a stereotypical image of a figure of power into the mass mind. The frame for this kind of image, in many respects far from reality, is always a clear interpretative marker, and the frame of Repin's painting of *Alexander III* was found to be especially significant seen in the context of imperial coronation ritual. The coordination of the picture frame with coronation ritual gave the opportunity to show maximum correspondence between various forms of framing of the image of an autocrat – plastic, literary, ceremonial, religious, the coronation rite linking church and palace with fine symbolic threads and providing a most important cultural-historical context for many kinds of palace framings.

In addition to all this, it was often found to be the case that not only did the function of an image determine the frame, but that the function of a frame also loaded and enriched a picture with a whole range of supplementary meanings connected with state symbolism, ritual, and palace architecture and decor. This involved both the design of a frame and its ornamentation with symbols and figures that contributed to the sacralization of the imperial personage and were initially seen in coronation ritual. It is to be noted that the Soviet period saw a similar sacralizing process, with hidden links between a political leader and religious mythology, in which the frames of paintings, engravings, miniatures and photographs and the framings provided by architectural niches and pedestals of statues regularly beckoned to a world of enchanted illusion – that leader's only reliable means of support. There was nothing new here; in both palace and church in Russia, aesthetic space was always permeated by a complex symbolic system.

Throughout this book it has been emphasized that the picture frame is a rhetorical instrument and a concentrated form of beauty. It is on account of this that the display not only of Russian icons but of secular pictures too always involved a background of complex rhetorical and aesthetic systems. The most striking example was provided by the

exhibitions of Vasiliy Vereshchagin, with their unusual degree of ideological commitment, in not only a Russian but also a general European context. As in preceding cases considered in this book, their aesthetic space was not separated from the spiritual life of the nation. Using general comparative typological yardsticks, an important conclusion was reached: a gradual dismantling of the Renaissance picture frame-as-window took place in parallel with an increased tendency of visual images to substitute for reality.

Abstraction reduced the frame to a narrow strip, with the aim of overcoming the boundary between art and life, influencing the world and giving it a new form. It is hard to disagree with Gadamer's observation that the frame of the easel painting began to be dismantled by contemporary artists at the beginning of the twentieth century, or with Heidegger's suggestion that art such as it has been since the Renaissance, with emotional experience at its heart, is gradually dying and that this process, although it is taking place very slowly, will lead inexorably to a transition from experience of the past to *Dasein*, to the appearance of 'a completely new element, in which art may emerge'.[1] In other words, the abolition of the conception of the frame-as-window in the twentieth century was driven by a desire to replace pictures with the problem of human existence, with the result that contemporary art 'torpedoes' life rather than imitating or adorning it, and has no need of the traditional frame, being based on the unstable spatial frontier between a world of symbolic forms and the world of real relations. It was noted at the beginning of this book that the Renaissance frame-as-window displayed a symbolic unity with the illusionist image constructed on the principles of linear perspective. It corresponded to an understanding of the integrity of the world, of its unity and worth; it *framed a picture of the world of man* from a defined viewpoint, with permanent values and ideals. The disappearance of such a frame, as of the image it held, in twentieth-century art has placed art in general under question, and is an indicator of the problematic nature of the external world, which has come to seem increasingly meaningless and unstable. Hence the minimalist strip surrounding an abstract painting comes to reflect the changeable nature of a picture of the world of man as an 'ideological wanderer' and the illusoriness of any given value system, and brings the whole question of the picture frame to the forefront of contemporary culturology.

Between these two poles, historical changes occurred in the understanding of the role of the picture frame in the creation of the illusory image. They proceeded in close relationship with rhetorical doctrine, the development of aesthetic theory, and the system of conventions in art. Thus in the eighteenth century the picture frame was subject to the will of the architect and served to harmonize a painting with the wall surrounding it. With the onset of Romanticism, however, the frame became more and more subject to the will of the artist, who sought to reflect personal experience in his work. It was important, therefore, in the example of Vereshchagin's exhibitions, to bring out not only the close links of the new methods of displaying paintings with the Romantic period (and also with positivist ideas) but also to show how this artist's exhibitions fitted into the broad context of the evolution of visual culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hence Vereshchagin's methods were seen to have been closely related

to the emergence of new techniques of influencing visual perception – the panorama, photography, the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. All these influential developments gradually led to the abolition of the picture frame and the increasing capacity of the visual image to attain the illusion of reality, which as a result brought about the dissolution of the easel painting and its frame into the artist's overall conception and the foregrounding of the conceptual frame. Thus, if in Vereshchagin's exhibitions catalogues with descriptions and historical background to his paintings played an important but still subordinate role, in the exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde of the twentieth century, catalogues and manifestos, with content that determined the process of perception, sometimes proved of greater importance than the work exhibited. All this demonstrates the complex mobility of the picture frame throughout the history of Russian art, sometimes tending towards invisibility, sometimes proclaiming its importance, sometimes undergoing substitution or supplementation. And all these developments took place simultaneously, cross-cutting and enriching each other, in a multilayered culture.

Finally, the complexity of all these processes was underlined by a glimpse at problems associated with authentication, auctions, the antiquarian art market and contraband in works of art; from time immemorial these have been nebulous corners where widely dispersed meanings, permutations and substitutions of conceptual framings have abounded and continue to abound. In order to find a way through the numerous arguments and counter-arguments on these topics, it was necessary to sketch theoretical definitions in the areas that are of such vital concern in the world of contemporary art, where it is not simply a question of manipulation of the truth and historical facts, but rather of the constant vulnerability of these facts to the historical processes of dissemination. It is as if a never-ending game were being played here. It is well known that human eyes can be over-fond of being deceived, taking true for false and vice versa. It will therefore be worth the reader's while to give due consideration to any picture frames that may be at hand at a given moment, and then this book will be seen in a new light: it will at once be supplemented by new observations and conclusions, for the innumerable frames that surround us constantly bring new aspects and angles to our attention. Hence the frame is unlikely ever to lose its cultural significance.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abramtsevo Museum: State Open-Air Museum of Fine Arts and Literary History 'Abramstevo', Moscow oblast
Archangel Museum of Art: Museum of Pictorial Arts, Archangel oblast
Archive of the Academy of Sciences: St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Arkhangel'skoye Museum: Museum-Estate 'Arkhangel'skoye', Moscow oblast
Art Museum of Velikiy Ustyug: Velikiy Ustyug Open-Air Museum of Architectural History and Art
BAN (Biblioteka Akadamiya nauk): Library of the Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg
BMST (Biblioteka Moskovskoy sinodal'noy tipografii): Library of the Moscow Sinodal Press
GE (Gosudarstvennyy Ermitazh): State Hermitage, St Petersburg
GIM (Gosudarstvennyy Istoricheskiy muzey): State Historical Museum, Moscow
GNIMA (Gosudarstvennyy nauchno-issledovatel'skiy muzey arkhitektury im. A. V. Shchuseva): A. V. Shchusev State Research Museum of Architecture, Moscow
GRM (Gosudarstvennyy Russkiy muzey): State Russian Museum, St Petersburg
GTG (Gosudarstvennaya Tret'yakovskaya galereya): State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
State Hermitage: State Hermitage, St Petersburg
IRI (*Istoriya russkogo iskusstva*): *A History of Russian Art*, ed. I. E. Grabar' (Moscow, 1913–14)
Kolomenskoye Museum: State Open-Air Museum of Architectural History and Art 'Kolomenskoye', Moscow
Kuskovo Museum: State Museum of Ceramics and 'Eighteenth-Century Estate of Kuskovo', Moscow
Museums of the Moscow Kremlin: State Open-Air Museum of Cultural History 'Moscow Kremlin'
NPG National Portrait Gallery, London
OARKh (*Yezhegodnik Obshchestva arkhitektorov-khudozhnikov*): *Yearbook of the Society of Architects and Artists, St Petersburg*
ORGRM (Otdeleniye rukopisey Gosudarstvennogo Russkogo muzeya): Department of Manuscripts, State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

ORGTG (Otdeleniye rukopisey Gosudarstvennogo Tret'yakovskogo galerei): Department of Manuscripts, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Ostankino Museum: Estate-Museum 'Ostankino', Moscow

Pereslavl-Zalessky Museum of Art: Museum-Preserve of Art History, Pereslavl-Zalessky

PLDR (*Pamyatniki literatury Drevney Rusi*): *Monuments of Old Russian Literature* (Moscow, 1994)

RGADA (Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv drevnikh aktov): Russian State Archive of Early Documents, Moscow

Tsarskoye Selo Museum: State Open-Air Museum of Art and Architecture (with Palace and Park) 'Tsarskoye Selo'

TSMIAR (Tsentral'nyy muzey drevnerusskoy kul'tury i iskusstva im. A. Rubleva): A. Rublyov Central Museum of Early Russian Culture and Art, Moscow

Yaroslavl Museum-Preserve (Yaroslavskiy muzey-zapovednik): Yaroslavl Open-Air Museum of Architectural History

REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

1 The conventionalized nature of the transmission of likeness is particularly well described by Ernst Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* (Gombrich 1989). In *The Sense of Order*, devoted to decorative art, Gombrich touches on the problem of the interaction between representation and decor, which relates directly to the interpretation of the symbolic role of ornament in the process of perception of the work of art (Gombrich 1994). Gombrich's views are set out in compressed and laconic form in his discussion with Didier Eribon (Gombrich and Eribon, 1993).
2 For a general overview of this tendency, see Minor (1994).
3 Schapiro (1996), p. 11. 'Culture consists of signs, and human cultural activity consists in giving them meaning' (Bel and Braysen 1996), p. 521.
4 Guggenheim (1897).
5 Falke (1892); Bode (1898–9); Bock (1902); Roche (1931); Ayrshire (1926); Morazzoni (1940); Heydenryk (1964).
6 Bock (1902), p. 21; Grimm (1981), p. 27.
7 Heydenryk (1964); Grimm (1981); Mitchell (1984); Mitchell and Roberts (1996). The last is one of the fullest studies of picture frames from the point of view of the development of artistic styles, containing materials from all the world's leading galleries. Following Heydenryk and Grimm, the authors give their primary attention to the form and construction of picture frames from Italy, France, Germany, Spain and the USA.
8 Fuchs (1985); Baldi and others (1992); *The Art of the Picture Frame* (1996); *The Gilded Edge* (2000); Bailey (2002).
9 Mosco (1991); *The Art of the Picture Frame* (1996); *Italian Renaissance Frames* (1990); *Historische Bilderrahmen* (1996).
10 *Framing in the Golden Age* (1995).
11 It appears that at this exhibition original frames by Western European artists from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth (Böcklin, Rossetti, Handt, von Stuck, Klinger, Degas, Pissarro, Seurat, van Gogh, Magritte, Dalí and many others) were brought together for the first time.
12 Ortega y Gasset (1986), p. 21.
13 Turchin (1971); Turchin (1973); Kalugina (1988); Karpova (2002); Sevastanova (2003); Frolova (2004).
14 Podoroga (1999); Sokolov (1999).
15 At this exhibition, held in the Marble Palace in St Petersburg, around 100 frames of artistic interest, made in Russian framing workshops by various craftsmen, were displayed. Those attributable to specific artists are allocated a separate section of the catalogue (*Odet' kartinu*, 2005).
16 Chubinskaya (1997).
17 Tarasov (2000), pp. 82–6; Tarasov (2004), pp. 214–51; Tarasov, trans. Milner-Gulland (2002), pp. 249–80.
18 Sofronova (MS, n.d.).
19 Troitsky (1897).
20 Lidov (2000).
21 As Yuriy Lotman noted, 'The frame of a picture, the framing of a stage, the edges of a screen make up the limits of the artistic world, locked into its

own universality. Certain theoretical aspects of art as a modelling system are bound up with this. The work of art is a model of the limitless world, though itself spatially limited. The frame of a picture, the footlights in a theatre, the beginning and end of a literary or musical work, the surface that delimits a sculpture or an architectural structure from the space that is excluded from it – all these are various aspects of the general rule of art: the work of art is the ultimate model of the infinite world' (Lotman 1998, p. 204). In Boris Uspensky's works it was the problem of the point of view of the author and spectator in connection with the concept of the framing of the literary text that received primary attention (Uspensky 1995, pp. 174–88, 259–60).

22 The purpose of both the material and the compositional frame of the work of art, in Zhegin's opinion, is 'to isolate the forms of painting from the surrounding milieu' (Zhegin 1970, p. 62).

23 Schapiro (1969); Schapiro (1996).

24 Panofsky discusses drawings attributed to Cimabue, and how to establish their authorship through analysing their framing, executed by Giorgio Vasari. As we know, Vasari produced such frames for the woodcut portraits in his *Lives of the Artists, Sculptors and Architects*. The Gothic style of those made for Cimabue's drawings poses questions that are no less interesting for the researcher, in Panofsky's opinion, than the drawings themselves (Panofsky 1999, p. 205).

25 Derrida (1987).

26 Derrida (1992), p. 55.

27 Zedl'mayr [Sedlmayer] (1999), p. 114–15.

28 Ibid., p. 114.

29 *The Rhetoric of the Frame* (1996).

30 Arnkheym [Arnheim] (1974); Gombrich (1989); Gombrich (1994); Zusne (1970); Kennedy (1974); Mitchell (1986); Mitchell (1994).

31 As the philosopher Lacan put it, 'However vacuous discourse might appear, it is so only on the surface. We should remember the words of Mallarmé, who compared the everyday use of language to the passing from hand to hand of a coin, long worn smooth on each side, circulating "in silence". Such metaphors are enough to remind us that the word, even if rubbed down to the limit, retains the value of a tessera. Even if it conveys nothing, discourse demonstrates the existence of communication' (Lacan 1995, p. 22); see also Lacan (1978), pp. 77–119.

32 See discussions of this subject in *Khudozhestvennyy zhurnal* (23, 1999), *Pinakoteka* (12, 2000). Outside Russia the culturology of the museum is one of the leading scholarly topics in art history. There is a wide literature on the subject, of which the most interesting for our purposes are: Bennett (1995); *Making History in Museums* (1996); *The Cultures of Collecting* (1994); *The New Museology* (1989); *New Museum* (2006); *Museum Studies* (2006).

33 Haskell (1995).

34 Mikhaylov (1997), pp. 112–75.

35 Berdyayev (1994), pp. 219, 233. An analogous view is expressed in Hans Belting's works: Belting (2002).

36 In this connection, recent studies have been paying ever greater attention to questions not of the artistic form of the icon as a finished work, but of the ways in which the sacred image functions in society: see Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London, 1985), R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker, eds, *The Sacred Image, East and West* (Chicago, 1995), and Oleg Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion: Sacred Spaces in Imperial Russia* (London, 2002). In addition, the artistic form of the icon cannot be regarded as 'art' from our modern point of view. Also, the degree of accomplishment attained by this art is measured by its ability to conduct the viewer's gaze beyond the bounds of reality. In this sense the icon is a most important experiment in overstepping the limits of humanity.

37 Lotman (1992), p. 414.

38 Losev (1990), p. 19.

39 Bakhtin (1979), p. 331.

CHAPTER 1: Symbolic Unity

1 Dimitriy Rostovsky, 'Komediya na Rozhdestvo Khristovo', in PLDR, III: *XVII vek*, p. 410.

2 Dionisiy Aeropagit, *O bozhestvennykh imenakh*, IV, 7.

3 'Zhivopisnyye izobrazheniya v altare', http://www.liturgi.ru.

4 Anisimov (1995), p. 53.

5 Schapiro (1969), p. 225.

6 Scholars have noted that the tokonoma niche, where vertical scrolls are placed in Japanese houses, is derived from the altar in a Buddist temple, where it indicated the chief interior sacred place: Nikolayeva (1989), p. 216.
7 Khaydegger [Heidegger] (1993), p. 216.
8 Various types of frame in ancient art are examined in the monograph by Ehlich (1954).
9 Cormack (1997), pp. 69–70.
10 Mathews (2001), pp. 170–72. This article sets out the basic framing structures of early Byzantine icons. On eight-sided frames of Sinai icons, see also Weitzmann (1976), p. 33.
11 RGADA, 248/160/691/3615.
12 Sterligova (2000), pp. 37–8. The metal covering (*oklad*) of an icon and its precious ornamentation can also be seen as a frame that is not distinct from the medieval cult image, and constitutes a single entity with it. In Sterligova's monograph this conceptual unity of the icon and its ornament is demonstrated from abundant material revealing the liturgical and social significance of the way the prayer image was framed.
13 Platon [Plato] (1994), p. 282.
14 Plotin [Plotinus], *Enneads* vi.7.32.
15 Sobolevsky (1914), pp. 111–13.
16 Florensky (1990); Panofsky (1997), and also Russian edition (2004), pp. 29–211.
17 The idea of the conquest of space found its embodiment, of course, in one of the fundamental Renaissance myths – that relating how 'Deus artifex' (God the Creator) conquers space 'by sequentially ordering forms and images, thus taking possession of space for the "Great Artist" – be he God or human being' (Toporov, 1994, p. 458).
18 Khaydegger [Heidegger] (1993), p. 147; see also Arnkheym [Arnheim] (1974), pp. 230–31.
19 Al'berti (1937), p. xxiv.
20 The fact that pictures and mirrors could take the same frames is interestingly attested in a notice of 1737 in the *St Petersburg News*: 'Out of many other announcements the following from the Academy of Sciences merits attention. In the vicinity of the Academy some large gilded frames have been found, but it is unclear to the Academy for what they are purposed: for mirrors or pictures.' Cf Stolpyansky (1913), p. 45.
21 Florensky (1990), p. 51.
22 Florensky (1922), pp. 90–91.
23 Florensky (1990), p. 53.
24 Ibid., pp. 80–81.
25 Ibid. (1990), p. 76. For a general overview of Florensky's scholarly ideas, see Misler (2002), pp. 85–92. Kemp (1990) is devoted to the creation and exploitation of all kinds of optical and framing devices for making perspective projections.
26 For the influence of neo-Kantianism on Panofsky's outlook, see Holly (1984), pp. 114–57.
27 Panofsky (1997), p. 43.
28 Ibid., pp. 51, 53–6.
29 Vitruviy [Vitruvius] (1936); Alberti (1935–7); Vin'yola [Vignola] (1939).
30 The basic types of Renaissance frames are shown in particular in the following publications: Guggenheim (1897); Mosco (1991); *Italian Renaissance Frames* (1990); Mitchell (1984).
31 C. Rowell, 'Display of art, §ii, 1', in *The Dictionary of Art* (London, 1996), IX, p. 14.
32 For a more detailed treatment of the category of *varietà* in Renaissance poetics, see Batkin (1990), pp. 27–104.
33 For example, the classical order system might be regarded as a 'civilizing social and psychological factor': Tataushvili (1998), p. 15.
34 Panofsky (1999), p. 8; cf 'For St Thomas the idea of an object to be created exists in the artist's mind as *an ideal image, in imitation of which something is made*' [author's italics], Eco (2004), p. 225.
35 It has been observed that the parapet inscribed in the lower part of fifteenth-century Florentine portraits in profile is reminiscent of the plinth of a bust, making the picture resemble a grave stele. When augmented by a real frame or the representation of one, it had the function of a magical barrier separating two worlds at the moment when it was ruptured by the gaze of the person depicted, fixed on the viewer.
36 Alberti (1937), p. 40; Leonardo da Vinci (1934), pp. 156–239.
37 Leonardo da Vinci (1935), p. 88.
38 Dyurer [Dürer] (1957), p. 262.
39 Lotman and Uspensky (1970), pp. 144–66.

40 Lakhmann (1989), pp. 149–69; Zhivov (2002), p. 338.
41 Annushkin (1999), pp. 225–38.
42 Ioannikiy Galyatovsky, *Klyuch razumeniya* (Kiev, 1659).
43 Grasian (1997). It has rightly been remarked that the innovatory meaning of the tract consisted in its reorientation of aesthetics from Aristotle's *Logic* and *Poetics* to his *On Rhetoric* (Daniel', 1984), p. 55.
44 Ushakov (1993), p. 58.
45 Bychkov (1992), p. 608.
46 Iosif Vladimirov, 'Poslaniye nekoyego izugrafa Iosifa k tsarevu izugrafu i mudreyshemu zhivopistsu Simonu Fedorovichu', in *Drevnerusskoye iskusstvo. XVII vek*, p. 29.
47 As quoted in Sofronova (2002), pp. 190, 198.
48 Chekalevsky (1792), p. 33.
49 Urvanov (1793), p. 9.
50 It is a well-known fact that in the second half of the seventeenth century Piscator's and Borcht's Bibles were widely employed as a source of new images: cf. Buseva-Davydova (1993), pp. 190–206.
51 Alekseyeva (2003), pp. 64–6.
52 Rovinsky (1881), III, no. 1354.
53 Simeon Polotsky, too, wrote epigrams about icons. Among his works there are to be found 'Verses on Certain Images' and 'Subscript to Italian Icons': cf. Sazanova (1991), p. 243. On icon inscriptions, see also Tarasov (2002), pp. 262–77. Of course, the epigram genre reaches back to antiquity, when poems dedicated to famous statues were particularly widespread: see Braginsky (1979), p. 21.
54 Including inscriptions in the system of representation was a characteristic feature of Western European Renaissance art in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: cf. Butor (1969), Sparrow (1969). Around 1500 discursive inscriptions more or less disappear from Northern European pictures, only to reappear abundantly in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, as it would evidently seem, under the influence of Protestant ideas: Michalski (1996), pp. 34–47. However, discursive texts acquire a broad distribution only in Protestant and Catholic engravings, whose compositions are copied by Russian artists.
55 Rovinsky (1881), no. 1449, pp. 596–600. See also Tarasov (1995), illus. 6.
56 Florensky (1993), pp. 275–81.
57 Peyts (1997), p. 19.
58 On how the two planes are framed, see Uspensky (1995), p. 293. The landscape behind the central figure is examined in its 'framing' role in Belting's work too: cf. Belting (2003), pp. 529–30.
59 Bock (1902), p. 23; Grimm (1981), p. 27; Bailey (2002), p. 23.
60 Pozdeyeva (1976), pp. 184–5.
61 Kochetkov (1996), pp. 407–8.
62 Grasian (1997), p. 220.
63 Despite the fact that the 'Moscow Heretics' had already been condemned in 1714, their case continued to be pursued in Synod documents right up to 1924. Tveritinov and his supporters spread iconoclastic ideas both among students of the Slav-Greek-Latin Academy and among icon painters: for more detail, see Tikhonravov (1898).
64 In the West a similar type of book was the *Marienatlas*, compiled in 1657 by the Jesuit Wilhelm Humpenberg and containing 1,200 icons of the *Mother of God*: Humpenberg (1957).
65 Vocotopoulos (2000), pp. 5–10.
66 *Istoriya estetiki* (1964), p. 628.
67 This and related documents were first examined in N. N. Sobolev's article: cf. Sobolev (1914). The publication of Sobolev's archival photographs was undertaken by G. A. Romanov (1992). For further references to the actual archival documents, and also to their individual publication by Sobolev, see below. Meanwhile, we examine the framed *Crucifixion* by Grigoriy Shumayev as a unified and finished work, and do not touch upon either the history of its creation, or the problems of its authorship. Probably Grigoriy Shumayev was among those who executed this grandiose and unusual concept. As far as our topic is concerned, it is one of the Baroque period frames in which the peculiarities of Baroque poetics and rhetoric were particularly clearly embodied.
68 RGADA, 248/100/7962/367, 395.
69 RGADA, 248/100/7962/358, 365, 382, 382 reverse.
70 Sofronova (1996), p. 61.
71 Dimitriy Rostovsky, *PLDR* (1994), p. 410.
72 Quoted from Sobolev (1914), pp. 108–9.
73 As his model the master of our iconostasis most probably took Piscator's Bible, in which the image of

the Heavenly City is executed in the system of linear perspective.

74 Cf. Sobolev (1914), p. 118.

75 The first statements forbidding writing on the margins of sacred texts appear in the fifteenth century: 'Whosoever writes on the margins of holy books shall have them all written out on the face in the other world'; 'Woe to him who makes marks on the margins of holy books: in the other world demons shall inscribe those words with an iron tool on his face'. As A. M. Panchenko has noted, these prohibitions signified a change in the 'philosophy of the written page'; they reveal a 'civilized expansion of the medium': Panchenko (2000), pp. 139–40. On the peculiarities of marginal images in Western medieval art, see Camille (1992).

76 Maguire (1981), p. 9.

77 Just as Christ and the Mother of God in icons with Lives could be framed by representations of Gospel parables or extensive texts, so in book production from the second half of the seventeenth century into the eighteenth a written account of a saint's Life could be framed by solemn oratorical 'discourses' and morally instructive examples. The same was true of early printings of the *Prolog*, issued several times from 1641 on: it included lives of saints, amplified by rhetorical sermons reflecting new currents in the theory of oratorical prose. There is a musical analogy for all these intricate representational and literary framings – ecclesiastical part singing, or 'multiple voices', introduced into liturgical practice in the seventeenth century.

78 Khippisley [Hippisley] (1993), p. 24.

79 It is quite possible that the iconography of the architectural background of the *Crucifixion* expressed the idea of Moscow as the Second Jerusalem: Yavorskaya (2006), p. 711.

80 'We have long known of places where what needs to be looked at is to be found within: the cell, the sacristy, the church, the theatre, the study for reading or displaying prints. These are favourite creations of the Baroque age, its glory and its strength': Delyoz [Deleuze] (1998), p. 50.

81 Baksandoll [Baxandall] (2003), p. 95.

82 RGADA, 248/100/7962/397 reverse.

83 Cf. Vdovin (1999), p. 174.

84 Benua [Benois] (1910), p. 46.

85 Fuko [Foucault] (1994), pp. 44–6; see also the chapter 'The Mirror in Art' in Dillenberger (1990), pp. 51–66.

86 Florensky considered the absence of shadow in the medieval icon from the point of view of his metaphysics of light, according to which the icon represents transfigured reality, devoid of shade: 'Light, in the painterly understanding, is merely the occasion for the self-revelation of the object. By contrast, for the icon painter no reality exists beyond the reality of light itself and that to which it will give birth': Florensky (1994), p. 136. The special treatment of shadow in the icon also points to the motion of the spectator's gaze, which is conditioned by the absence of any particular focus of light in the icon; the impulse to 'eradicate' masses that should be in darkness; the 'contrariness of illumination' in the sacred space of the icon: Florensky (1990), pp. 45, 47.
The cultural-historical significances of shadow in Western European painting are examined, in particular, in Stoichita (1997), pp. 42–87, and Gombrich (1995).

87 Istomin (1994), p. 256.

88 Yavorsky (1991), p. 263.

89 'Anonimnaya poeziya', *PLDR*, *XVII vek*, Book 3 (1994), p. 321.

90 This rare photograph of a mirror in framing of the second half of the seventeenth century was taken by I. F. Barshchevsky in the chancel of the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Romanov-Borisoglebsk (1652), as testified by its inscription.

91 Sokolova (2003), pp. 153–9.

92 Sobolev (1914), p. 104.

93 Boehn (1966), pp. 110–33.

94 Lotman (1998), p. 647.

95 Sofronova (1996), p. 96.

96 Gottlieb (1981), p. 73.

97 Yavorsky (1991), p. 264.

98 'The ladder to Heaven . . . which is in remembrance of the four last things, briefly described in verses', ibid., pp. 302–20.

99 Quoted from Sobolev (1914), p. 109.

100 It was the strengthening of the didactic tendency in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century image that led to the development of the iconography of angels

– notably the appearance of new subjects in which angels constantly mediate between the earthly and the heavenly: Benchev (2005), pp. 217–31.

101 Sazonova (1991), p.87.

102 We are using the text as republished in 1995: Maksimovich-Ambodik (1995).

103 *Ikonologiya* (1803).

104 Tarasov (2000), pp. 155–65.

105 Maksimovich-Ambodik (1995), p. 70.

106 Ibid., p. 28.

107 Ibid., pp. 35, 31.

108 Alciato (1531); Aneau (1552).

109 *Istoriya estetiki* (1964), p. 628.

110 Morozov and Sofronova (1974).

111 Praz (1975), p. 170; Blunt (1940), pp. 103–6.

112 Tarasov (1995), pp. 347–56.

113 The word 'cartouche' may derive from the Greek *charta* ('papyrus', 'paper'). In Gombrich's opinion, there is an alternative derivation from the Italian word *cartellino*, that is, 'small card' (or 'paper'), which was inserted into a picture as part of the representation. It was on cards of this kind that Renaissance artists often inscribed their name or some sort of dedication of their work: Gombrich (1994), p. 241; compare Vyol'flin [Wöllflin] (2004), pp. 100–01. The cartouche apparently began its triumphant progress from the decoration of the Raphael Stanze in the Vatican Palace, where it appears as what is known in German as *Rollwerk*, literally something 'rolled into a tube' – ornament containing figurative compositions and patterns within a motif of the rolled-up leaves of a book or a scroll: Sokolov (1999), pp. 158–9.

114 Ripa (1971).

115 *Ornamental'naya gravyura* (1986), p. 28; see also Rakova (1999), nos. 29, 31, 113.

116 Delyoz [Deleuze] (1998), pp. 50–51.

CHAPTER 2: From the Middle Ages to Romanticism

1 Ivanov (1974), p. 664.

2 Polenova (1922), pp. 30–43.

3 It should be noted that the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow was sometimes seen in this light: 'The Church of Christ the Saviour in the role of historical museum, representing a collection of works of art, will show future generations the level of perfection that the contemporary art of painting has attained in Russia': Mostovsky (1884), p. 71.

4 Kirichenko (1997), pp. 255–65.

5 Art as a means for transfiguring reality had also been scrutinized in Germany. The idea was put forward by Richard Wagner in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1850), and was actively developed by the architect Gottfried Semper, the artist Franz von Lehnbach, the art historian J. Brinckmann and many others. It was given the name *Gesamtkunstwerk* ('Union of the Arts') in German; we shall discuss it in more detail below.

6 Far-Bekker (2000), p. 31. On the resurrection and reconfiguration of Byzantine art in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, see Bullen (2003), pp. 151–68.

7 Solov'yov (1966), p. 90.

8 Kant (1966), p. 233.

9 Solov'yov (1966), p. 58.

10 Ibid. p. 58.

11 Dal' (1878), p. 77.

12 Butovsky (1870); Stasov (1872); Stasov (1870); Gagarin (1887). Fedor Buslayev in articles of the 1860s and 1870s was the first to show the historical evolution of Old Russian book illumination: i.e. the sequential development in ancient manuscripts of basic decorative styles – Byzantine, Teratological, Balkan and Neo-Byzantine; Buslayev (1917), pp. 84–9, 153–4.

13 Butovsky (1870), p. 1. Numerous Western publications on the history of ornament have pursued similar goals: cf. Jones (1856); Spelz (1910); Evans (1975). At the same period examples of ornament become the subject of private collectors and museums: to quote Stasov, 'The unusual forms and beauties of Russian ornament have at last attracted to it that universal attention that was for so long denied it. At the present time not only here, but in many public museums and private collections special sections have been formed, dedicated to the assembly of objects among which Russian national ornament plays the most significant role': Stasov (1872), p. iii. In craft museums, examples of ornament are collected and classified on historical principles. Such were the collections not only of the Stroganov School in Moscow, but

also of Baron Stieglitz's College of Technical Drawing in St Petersburg, where specialists in applied art were trained. Examples of ornament were used as teaching materials in the study of the history of artistic styles.

14 Sarab'yanov (1989), p. 181.
15 Sakharova (1964), p. 506.
16 Ryoskin [Ruskin] (1900), p. 287, and (1904), p. 24.
17 Grabar' (1913), p. 116.
18 Rozanov (1994), p. 257; see also Svechnikov (1913); Izgoy (1899), p. 491–2; Dedlov (1901), p. 49.
19 Solov'yov (1993), p. 174.
20 Vasnetsov (1987), p. 81.
21 The Committee for the Care of Russian Icon Painting (1901–18), under the aegis of Emperor Nicholas II, recommended the religious images of Vasnetsov as models for the icon craftsmen of Palekh, Mstyora and Kholuy: for more detail on this, see Tarasov (2001), pp. 73–101.
22 For more detail on the Romantic cult of Raphael, see Belting (2001), pp. 59–62.
23 Vinkel'man [Winckelmann] (1933), pp. 206–13.
24 Bulgakov (1902), pp. 120–23.
25 Panofsky (1999), p. 82.
26 Berdyayev (1994), p. 309.
27 Shelling [Schelling] (1996), pp. 48, 70.
28 Vasnetsov (1987), p. 81.
29 According to Ye. Golubinsky, in Old Russian churches 'local icons were placed outside the barrier, that is to say, behind or in front of it in special casings, and it was only at a later date that they were made properly part of it': Golubinsky (1872), pp. 585–6.
30 Buseva-Davydova (2000), p. 623.
31 When framing Western European images of Christ and the Virgin, flower and fruit ornamentation always carried a complex weight of symbolism. Lilies, for example, could indicate not only the purity of the Virgin Mary, but also Christ's victory over death, roses with thorns foreshadowed the Saviour's torments, flowering thistles were a widespread symbol of the sufferings on the Cross, and so on; for more on this, see Zvezdina (2000), pp. 651–69. As Boris Vipper observed, all this new ornamentation of Russian places of worship and domestic buildings showed features of European Mannerism: 'In the first half of the seventeenth century, decorative motifs penetrate Russian architecture basically from Holland, Denmark and Germany. Here we are dealing both with decorative devices and with the typical repertoire of early Mannerism, still inspired by echoes of Renaissance ornamentation: here there are decorative arabesques, and motifs of vegetal ornament, and stylized patterns of "Mooresque" type. The decoration is primarily of two-dimensional character, is distinguished by brilliant colourfulness and has chiefly a "filler" function . . . Among early examples the decorative adornment of entrance ways into living quarters – whose prototypes are found in Germany (Lübeck and Wismar) from the middle and later sixteenth century – are particularly instructive. The transition to a second stage is demonstrated by the ceramic tile decor of the cathedral of the New Jerusalem monastery, from the second half of the seventeenth century. Here we observe the favourite decorative motifs of high Mannerism – the cartouche (*Rollwerk*) and masks; meanwhile the motif of fantastic "scutcheons" is also repeated in the ornamental colonnade, while at the same time the characteristic late Mannerist blending and interweaving of the "filling out" and "framing" functions is observed.' Vipper also notes that the ceramic decoration of certain Yaroslavl churches of the second half of the seventeenth century (for example of St John Chrysostom in Korovniki) are a variant of those sculptural frames that in Northern European lands decorated a multitude of monuments, altars and altar pictures at the turn of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth: Vipper (1978), pp. 20–21.
32 Benua [Benois] (1910), p. 50.
33 Vyol'flin [Wölfflin] (2004), p. 145.
34 Delyoz [Deleuze] (1998), p. 52; Vyol'flin [Wölfflin] (2004), pp. 187–209.
35 Tarabukin (1999), p. 107.
36 Panofsky (1999), pp. 86–7.
37 Chekalevsky (1792), pp. 30–33.
38 Eliade (1994), p. 24.
39 Bobrik (2000), pp. 525–58.
40 *Gosudarstvennaya Tret'yakovskaya gallereya* (1995), p. 132.
41 Interwoven ornament has sometimes been associated with such literary images as 'the snares of the

world', 'the snares of evil', 'the fetters of untruth', as also with such attributes of Christian asceticism as chains, straps, ropes and rosaries; Kiselev (1984), pp. 174–5.
42 Pluzhnikov (1977), p. 88.
43 On the significance of daylight in the formation of the sacred space of the medieval place of worship, see Dell'Acqua (2006), pp. 299–324.
44 Window frames close in form to the corona of the Mother of God can be seen in the walls of St Nicholas in Khamovniki, Moscow, and the Trinity Church (1668) in Ostankino, a suburb of Moscow; see Grabar' (1913), plates on pp. 173 and 128.
45 Gottlieb (1981), pp. 67-82.
46 Berdyayev (1994), p. 221.
47 Vinkel'man [Winckelmann] (1996), pp. 194, 196.
48 For more detail on the history of the Mandylion, see Yevseyeva and others (2003).
49 Vasnetsov (1987), p. 21.
50 Bulgakov (1993), p. 283.
51 Panofsky (1999), p. 194. We should note that in ecclesiastical rhetoric the snake has from ancient times been one of the most widespread and active symbols. It suffices to recollect the 'S' shaped representation of a serpent on the Tau cross, which in one of the emblems of the Rosicrucian order symbolizes wisdom revealed through initiation – a journey towards the spiritual sphere up the vertical axis of the cross.
52 Sokolov (1999), p. 465.
53 Dal' (1905), p. 266; see also Sreznevsky (1989), pp. 1207, 1209.
54 Abramovich (1931), p.119.
55 Quoted from Shchennikova (2002), p. 153.
56 Uspensky (1902), p. 15.
57 Ibid., p. 8.
58 For a more detailed account, see Tarasov (1995), pp. 311–86.
59 Uspensky (1910), pp. 27–8, 31.
60 Ibid., pp. 38, 31, 245, 244.
61 Riegl (1901).
62 Sobolev (2000), p. 167.
63 Białostocki (1976), pp. 84–5.
64 Moroz (1998), p. 120.
65 Eliade (1994), p. 17.
66 Quoted from Sofronova (1996), p. 61.
67 Grabar' (1913), p. 424.
68 On the same analogy, the west wall of the iconostasis, by Rastrelli, at St Andrew's church in Kiev (1746–8) was painted with subjects from the Old Testament and Apocalypse: cf. Bezsonov (1951), p. 17.
69 Urvanov (1793), pp. 19–21.
70 If we regard the signature of a craftsman as a 'framing device', which is always at the periphery of the gaze directed towards the icon, then its content, location and composition will acquire additional meanings. In the Middle Ages, as a rule, icons were not signed. Occasionally, the name of the craftsman was put on the back of the icon. In connection with the development of the concept of the 'master craftsman' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, icons more and more often carry a signature. On icons by the craftsmen of the Armoury Palace of the second half of the seventeenth century the inscription could include the place and time of the icon's painting, its dedication and the name of the patron. Here for example is the inscription on an icon of the *Dormition of the Mother of God* in the Tretyakov Gallery Collection: 'In the year 7171/1663 this present image was painted by the icon painter Pimin, known as Simon son of Feodor Ushakov, with his pupils Yegor and Ivan, for the Gorokhovsky district to go to the hermitage on the Krasnyye Frolishchevskiye hills, for the monastery church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, founded by the abbot Ilarion, that peace should come unto him and to his relations': Antonova and Mnyova (1963), pp. 410–11. The craftsman's signature might also be placed in a separate compartment, no longer located on the margin of the icon, but within the central element – that is, like the signature on a Western European painting or engraving.
71 Incidentally, this process has direct analogues in Western European art: images for prayer painted on boards with integral framings, as also laths glued to the board of an altar polyptych, are regarded as an intermediate stage in the separation of the frame from the image: see Grimm (1981), pp. 26–30; Mitchell and Roberts (1996), pp. 86–7.
72 Zabelin (1862), pp. 163–4; see also Rovinsky (1900), pp. 66–71.
73 The Dutch painter Dettersohn is first mentioned as

a member of the Armoury Palace staff in 1642. From the 1660s S. Lopucki and D. Wuchters, and also a Greek called A. Yur'yev, worked there; and in 1679–80 the 'foreigner' I. Val'ter. It is known that a painting workshop, headed by Ivan Bezmin, was set up in 1683. From 1687 a painting studio under Karp Zolotaryov worked at the Great Ambassadorial Court. We can suppose that it was from this time that picture frames became a widespread feature of Russian court culture.

74 The document is published in Yevangulova (1987), pp. 272–3, 275–8.

75 We should note that in the Renaissance period frames sometimes cost more than their pictures. Thus, as Vasari testifies, for one Florentine altar the artist Filippo Lippi received 200 gold crowns, while the frame-maker Baccio d'Agnolo was paid 250, and another 200 for the gilding. The cost of framing Botticelli's *Virgin and Child with SS John the Baptist and John the Evangelist* (1485; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) was also rather high. For the picture, the artist received 75 florins and 15 solidi (out of which 2 florins were earmarked for ultramarine pigment, and 38 for the gilding of the frame), while the sculptor Giuliano da Sangallo took 24 gold gulden, 8 solidi and 5 dinari for making the frame and preparing the board for painting: Grimm (1981), pp. 19, 30.

76 Ibid. p. 22, illus. 30, 64, 440; Heydenryk (1964), p. 31.

77 Eko [Eco] (2004), p. 226.

78 *Zapiski imperatritsy* (1907), p. 53.

79 Benua [Benois] (1910), pp. 44, 53. It is worth noting that it was evidently the artists of the 'World of Art' group who were the first to notice the significance of Russian eighteenth-century icon painting: 'The business of icon painting had its own kind of flowering under Elizabeth. It is true to say that all the bases of its earlier splendour had been forgotten; it is true that it presented a strange and often unpleasant mixture of Byzantinism with Western elements, with the latter incidentally much more apparent than the former. But all the same the icon painters continued to have an excellent understanding of the decorative significance of icons, and they had not forgotten many of the technical devices that had given their works an admirable brightness and freshness – hence also a festive quality': Benua (1912), p. 11.

80 'Dva tainstvennykh dvortsa Razumovskikh', *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (1914), no. 16–17, p. 6.

81 Fergyuson [Fergusson] (1998), pp. 160, 226.

82 Solov'yov (1966), p. 85.

83 Veselovsky (1939), p. 132.

84 Buslayev (1908), pp. 252–3.

85 Ibid., p. 252.

86 *The Origins of Museums* (1985).

87 Rakina (1995), p. 22.

88 Buslayev (1897), pp. 168–70.

89 For more about these collections, see Filimonov (1849); Pogodin (1849).

90 Vzdornov (1986), pp. 194–5.

91 ORGTG, 31/657/1.

92 Likhachev (1898), pp. 59–60.

93 Dil'tey [Dilthey] (1909), pp. 30–36.

94 In particular, *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) by Wölfflin came out in a Russian translation in 1913. It was just at that period that art history was becoming a self-sufficient scholarly discipline in Russia, and a formal school of national art history was in the process of formation. Under the influence of German scholarship the work of art was beginning to be regarded as a self-contained form. In St Petersburg the centre for the study of the German formal school was the Institute of Art History, opened by V. Zubov in 1912; while in Moscow it was Moscow University, where the works of Semper, Wölfflin, Worringer, Riegl, Fiedler and other scholars were enthusiastically studied. In 1914 Adolf von Hildebrand's *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* was published in Russian translation, and at the same time the first scholarly history of Russian art was in preparation under the editorship of Igor Grabar' (1913–14).

95 *Russkaya ikona* (1, 1914), pp. 5–6.

96 Rerikh (1914), pp. 14, 17, 19.

97 For more detail on the collectors and collections of that period, see Vzdornov (2006), pp. 217–55.

98 Bobrov (1987), p. 38; Nikiforaki (1936), pp. 144–7.

99 Shchekotov (1913), pp. 41–2, 39.

100 See Lipps (1909), pp. 377–81.

101 Muratov (1914), p. 4.

102 As Aleksey Grishchenko has noted, it was just at that time 'that the term *Novgorod icon* [author's

emphasis] became a synonym for all that was outstanding and remarkable in the field of the Russian icon'; Grishchenko (1917), p. 47.

103 Aleppsky (1897), p. 108.

104 Ryabushinsky (1908), pp. 1700–05.

105 This kind of 'restoration' sometimes involved freely exchanging various elements of the iconostasis (maybe those in private collections too), replacing genuine icons with copies painted onto old boards.

106 Muratov (1914), p. 6.

107 Shchekotov (1914), p. 140.

108 Grishchenko (1917), p. 249.

109 Shcherbatov (2000), p. 210.

110 Haskell (1995), pp. 461–8.

111 See the illustrated catalogue *Vystavka drevnerusskogo iskusstva* (1913).

112 Muratov (1913), p. 36; see also Punin (1913), pp. 39, 41.

113 Muratov (1913), p. 34.

114 Florensky (1985), pp. 49–50.

115 *Russkaya ikona*, 2 (1914).

116 Ibid., 1 (1914).

117 Sychev (1916), pp. 6–7.

118 Shcherbatov (2000), p. 43.

119 'Natal'yevka (Khar'kovskoy gub. Bogodukhovskogo uyezda im[eniye] P. I. Kharitonenko)', *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, 32 (1915), pp. 8–9. Defining the church on the estate as a 'museum-church', the author of this article wrote: 'Among famous collections of Old Russian icon painting, that which is assembled at Natal'yevka has an outstanding place, both through the quality and rarity of individual specimens and through the general artistic impression which these [masterpieces] of Russian religious painting produce. Several items from Kharitonenko's collection of icons were displayed at the "Exhibition of Icon Painting and Artistic Antiquities" at the meeting of artists in Petersburg in 1911–12, and in Moscow at the celebrations of the three-hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty. A "tier" of nine large icons in the fifteenth-century Novgorod manner attracted particular public attention.'

120 Trubetskoy (1993), p. 208.

121 Bulgakov (1993), p. 286.

122 Fyodorov-Davydov (1975), p. 117.

123 Fyodorov-Davydov (1933), pp. 70–71.

124 Bazin (1967), pp. 263–4.

CHAPTER 3: The Lustre of Power

1 *Kamer-fur'yerskiy tseremonial'nyy zhurnal*, 21 (1885), p. 45.

2 Ibid., p. 48.

3 *Koronatsionnyy sbornik*, I (1899), p. 147.

4 'The Antechamber is square, its walls light blue with white stucco mouldings. Directly before the main entrance hangs a painting by the artist Repin, *Emperor Alexander III Receiving the Heads of the Volosts in the Inner Courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace beyond the Tver' Barrier*': Bartenev (1916), p. 35.

5 On the semantics of the words 'beginning' and 'end' as a symbolic frame giving unity and integrity to an object, see Arutyunova, ed. (2002).

6 Bartenev (1916), p. 45.

7 Lotman and Uspensky (1993), p. 206.

8 Sers (2001), p. 141; for detail on the cult of Lenin, see Groys (2003), pp. 88–97; on the influence of sacred archetypes in Stalinist culture, see also Papernyy (1996).

9 Zhivov and Uspensky (1994), pp. 110–218.

10 Solov'yov (1989), p. 602.

11 Losev (1990), p. 24.

12 Quoted in Zhivov and Uspensky (1994), p. 160.

13 Benua [Benois] (1910), p. 102.

14 In the middle of the nineteenth century, all this Baroque symbolism became politically unacceptable to the Church authorities. The frame with celestial figures bearing the image or monogram of the monarch up to heaven makes the composition look like a supplicatory image, all the more so since such portraits were placed in churches next to icons.
It was for this reason that Filaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, pronounced that the archangels Michael and Gabriel should not be depicted supporting the imperial coat of arms, and he issued a resolution, ratified in 1832, that portraits of the emperor and members of the imperial family should be removed from churches: 'His Imperial Majesty, having observed in certain churches portrayals not belonging to those placed there in order to promote reverence and worship and to arouse a spirit of prayer, in accordance with His Imperial Majesty's habitual feeling of reverence towards the Holy Church and of humility before God, is pleased to decree that there

shall be no representations in churches save images of saints and paintings and portrayals from sacred history and the history of the Church depicting sacred events; and that in particular, portraits of his Most August family shall not be placed in churches': Filaret (1895), pp. 85–6.

15 Viktorov (1882), p. 393.
16 Quoted in Yevangulova (1987), p. 272.
17 Presnova (1995), p. 34.
18 This unusual frame performed a multiplicity of tasks. Its red colour not only enhanced the dramatic significance of the portrait but also picked it out on the wall. Candlelight sharpened its profile, spreading its shadow. But a gilt frame could achieve no less an effect; owing to its reflective capacity, gilt literally 'burned', distributing light over the paint surface.
19 Further on this topic, see Grebenyuk (1989), pp. 191–2, 194.
20 Frolova (2004), pp. 15–16.
21 Originally this carved frame by P. Spol' was intended for a portrait of Catherine II. After the coronation of Paul I in 1796, N. P. Sheremetev commissioned Argunov's portrait using this frame; see Yelizarova (1966), pp. 30–31.
22 Ye. S., 'Usad'ba Struiyskikh "Ruzayevka"', *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (1915), no. 38–9, pp. 3–4.
23 'Volokitin', *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (1915), no. 44, pp. 4–5.
24 The curtain usually moved on a thread fastened to the inner edges of the frame. Furthermore, traces of similar fastenings have been found together on the same frame in examples from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, indicating that different curtains were attached to it from time to time: S. Grimm (1981), p. 23.
25 Depiction of trophies is also an independent theme of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century decorative engravings. The Hermitage Collection, for example, contains a series of engravings titled 'Military trophies in the Italian style, newly designed and engraved by J. Lepotre': *Ornamental'naya gravyura*, p. 50.
26 *Pis'ma i bumagi Petra Velikogo*, I (1887), p. 603.
27 Poplavsky (2000).
28 *Pis'ma i bumagi Petra Velikogo*, IX/2 (1952), pp. 1023–4.
29 The construction of these triumphal gates was coordinated with other triumphal artistic spectacles such as firework displays and masquerades, which emphasized the limitless character of autocratic power. See further Vasil'yev (1960); Tyukhmeneva (2005).
30 Arsen'yev and Trutovsky (1914), p. 104.
31 Maksimovich-Ambodik (1995), p. 26.
32 *Russkoye iskusstvo epokhi barokko* (1984), pp. 39–40; see also 'Konklyuziya na prestolonaslediye 1742 goda', ibid., p. 30.
33 To the iconography of Kneller's portrait belongs, for example, one of the earliest indoor ceremonial portraits of Peter I by an unknown artist (*c.* 1703) and also the well-known *Apotheosis of Peter* that reproduces the composition of Daniil Galyakhovsky's engraving of 1709 presented to the tsar by Feofan Prokopovich after victory at Poltava; *Russkiy istoricheskiy portret* (2004), illus. 75, 79.
34 Stolpyansky (1913), p. 46.
35 *Russkoye iskusstvo epokhi barokko* (1984), p. 40.
36 *Novoye vremya*, 1 (13) May 1883.
37 Ibid., 2 (14) May 1883. A description of the coronation ritual was also contained in a separate publication, *Koronovaniye i svyashchenneysheye miropomazaniye ikh imperatorskikh velichestv* . . . (1883).
38 Published as illustrations in *Koronatsionnyy sbornik*, I (1899).
39 Bogolyubov (1895), pp. 35–6.
40 *Koronovaniye* (1883), p. 33.
41 Uspensky (1998), pp. 15–16.
42 *Koronatsionnyy sbornik*, I (1899), p. 16.
43 Ibid., p. 135.
44 *Al'bom koronatsii ikh imperatorskikh velichestv 15 maya 1883 goda* (1883).
45 *Slovo v den' svyashchennogo koronovaniya* (1883), pp. 6–7, 10–12.
46 *Novoye vremya*, 27 May (8 June) 1883.
47 'Rech' Gosudaryu Imperatoru, proiznesyonnaya vysokopreosvyashchennym mitropolitom moskovskim Ioannikiyem pri osvyashchenii khrama Khrista Spasitelya 26 maya', *Novoye vremya*, 29 May (10 June) 1883.
48 Lotman, *Kul'tura i vzryv* (1992), p. 111.

CHAPTER 4: Between Industry and Art

1 Bakhtin (1979), p. 117.
2 Kant (1966), p. 229.
3 'For His Majesty's study on the first floor of the Petrovsky Palace: wall mouldings and a frame for a painting showing the election of Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov as Tsar' (1859): RGADA, 1239/3/21/19 166.
4 Diderot (1989), pp. 66–7.
5 Gogol (1949), pp. 77, 82–3; Kibrik's drawing is from N. V. Gogol', *Portret* (Moscow, 1979), p. 87.
6 Ortega y Gasset (1991), pp. 200–21.
7 On orientalism in painting, see Said (1991); Thornton (1983); *The Orientalists* (1984).
8 'Vereshchagin's artistic experiments,' writes one modern scholar, 'not only found a response from contemporary painters but also foreshadowed the art that was to come in the shape of the cinematograph. In fact, he approached the system of representation that in the language of the cinema was to be called the panoramic': Bruk (2004), pp. 21–3.
9 *V. V. Vereshchagin v Tretyakovskoy galereye* (1992), p. 142.
10 'Vystavka kartin V. V. Vereshchagina', *Molva*, 57, 1880.
11 Lebedev (1972), p. 197.
12 'Po povodu vereshchanskoy vystavki kartin', *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaya promyshlennost'*, 16 (1900), p. 213.
13 Vereshchagin (1982), p. 144.
14 Karpova (2002), p. 184.
15 Rhodes (1997), pp. 74–84.
16 Vereshchagin (1874).
17 *Perepiska V. V. Vereshchagina i V. V. Stasova*, II (1951), p. 90.
18 *Katalog vystavki kartin V. V. Vereshchagina* (1883), pp. 6–10.
19 ORGTG, 17/672.
20 *Perepiska V. V. Vereshchagina i P. M. Tretyakova* (1963), p. 14.
21 See further Wazbinski (1963), pp. 278–83.
22 Speaking epitaphs and epigrams were a constant tradition from antiquity through the Byzantine era up to medieval Europe, with the commemorated dead personally addressing a wide variety of persons, such as passers-by, travellers, friends and family. The same was true of speaking epitaphs on Antique vessels and statues – for example, 'Pirr. [son of] Agasicles made me' or 'I am a statue of Phoebus Apollo, the splendid son of Latona' – which practice passed on to the inscriptions of Renaissance masters. See further Braginskaya (1979), pp. 17–21.
23 *Katalog kartinam, etyudam i risunkam V. V. Vereshchagina* (1874). The frame bearing this inscription is preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery. Pavel Tretyakov may have acquired it after Vereshchagin destroyed the painting and it may have served to display the photograph taken of the work.
24 Karamzin (1964), p. 192.
25 Contrasting depiction and text was one of the favourite devices of the artists of the avant-garde, who were fond of complicating the process of perception. 'I chose titles in such a way,' explained Magritte, 'as not to place my pictures on the level of the expected, where an automatic train of thought would always lead them away from the realm of unease' (quoted by Foucault [Fuko], 1999, p. 44). Foucault set out to explain this procedure in a detailed investigation of calligrams (ibid., pp. 15–36).
26 *Katalog kartinam, etyudam i risunkam V. V. Vereshchagina* (1874).
27 Ibid., pp. 4, 15.
28 ORGTG, 1/893.
29 *Russkoye slovo* (1895), no. 321.
30 Ibid.
31 Quoted by Lebedev (1972), p. 200.
32 Stasov (1894), p. 10.
33 Ben'yamin [Walter Benjamin] (1996), pp. 22, 25–6.
34 *Katalog vystavki kartin V. V. Vereshchagina* (1883). For books by Vereshchagin sold at his exhibitions, see the first five titles in Russian and the single title in English listed in the Bibliography.
35 Vereshchagin (1874).
36 *Perepiska V. V. Vereshhagina i V. V. Stasova*, II (1951), p. 105.
37 Bazhak [Quentin Bajac] (2003), p. 87.
38 Schapiro (1969), pp. 227, 241–2.
39 Arnkheym [Arnheim] (1974), p. 231.
40 As is well known, Degas' frames interested Sergey Eisenstein, who in the opinion of Vyacheslav Vs. Ivanov anticipated both Schapiro's conclusions and the general formulation of the problem of the frame in modern art history. In January 1948 Eisenstein

stated that 'Degas' moment-seizing frame engenders knowledge' and 'anticipates the cinematographic frame': Ivanov (1999), I, pp. 214–19.
41 Bazhak [Bajac] (2003), pp. 75–7.
42 Burke (2001), p. 150.
43 Bann (2001), p. 123.
44 Quoted by Lebedev (1972), p. 187.
45 Tugendhol'd (1916), pp. 95, 103.
46 Burke (2001), p. 150.
47 Nemirovich-Danchenko (1878), p. 93.
48 Lebedev (1972), p. 209.
49 Quoted by Bulgakov (1896), p. 182.
50 Benua [Benois] (1955), pp. 143–5.
51 Ziloti (1998), p. 115.
52 Repin (1986), p. 25.
53 Mudrogel' (1961), pp. 127–30. See the discussion prompted by Balashov's attack on this painting (Voloshin, 1913, p. 2).
54 ORGTG, f. no. 64.
55 Comment (1999), p. 52.
56 Ibid., illus 79, 114, 127–30, 131.
57 'B. N. W.', *Staryye gody* (July–Sept 1913), p. 218.
58 Arapov (1861), p. 310.
59 Bazhenov (1869), p. 103.
60 Paston (2003), pp. 324–5.
61 Makovsky (1955), p. 83.
62 'Videniye proshlogo', *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (1916), nos. 60–61, p. 25.
63 The director is here emphasizing that the difference between the cinematographic shot and that of the ordinary camera is that in the former the visual composition is constantly changing (Kuleshov, 1999, pp. 34–6). It is interesting therefore to compare the edge of the cinematographic lens, seizing a 'piece' of reality, with the frame-device for creating a perspectival picture that plays an important role in shot-construction in the well-known film *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), directed by Peter Greenaway (see Pascoe, 1997, pp. 71–4, illus 20–23).
64 Comment (1999), p. 52.
65 Montegyu (1969), p. 29.
66 Chtyreva (1996), pp. 137–53.
67 Denvir (1994), p. 288.
68 Minchenkov (1959), p. 211.
69 Vrubel (1976), p. 288.
70 Karpova (2000), p. 34.
71 Semyonov and Khorev (1990), p. 145.
72 Repin (1986), p. 403.
73 Stolpyansky (1913), p. 51.
74 Gogol (1949), p. 70.
75 Mitchell and Roberts (1996), p. 13.
76 The art of the frame reached a peak in the eighteenth century, when specialists exclusively devoted to the framing of paintings appeared at the courts of European monarchs – for example, the French masters Etienne-Louis Infroit and A. Levert, making frames in Louis XVI style for the palaces and galleries of the French aristocracy, which they were exceptional in signing (Grimm, 1981, p. 18, illus. 296, pp. 306, 307). Typical of the Louis XVI style were the oval frames widespread in France between 1770 and the 1790s, associated with the fashion for ancient Roman cameos (Newbery, 2002, p. 50). This was the heyday of the ornamental designs of the French goldsmith J. Aurèle Meissonnier (1695–1750), especially his 'Book of Ornaments', and the ornamental prints of Antoine Watteau, François Boucher, Jacques de Lajoue and Nicolas Pineau (Rakova, 1997, p. 6).
77 Newbery (2002), p. 34; Mitchell and Roberts (1996), p. 40; Sevast'yanova (2004), pp. 42–3.
78 ORGTG, 1/1687.
79 Minchenkov (1959), p. 70.
80 Ibid., pp. 169, 211.
81 Ibid., p. 288.
82 Mudrogel' (1961), pp. 29–30.
83 ORGTG, 1/884.
84 Ibid., no. 885.
85 Ibid., no. 968.
86 Ibid., no. 67.
87 Ibid., f. 15, no. 40.
88 Minchenkov (1959), p. 96.
89 Vereshchagin (1982), p. 144.
90 ORGTG, 17/8.
91 Ibid., no. 90; see also no. 96.
92 Ibid., no. 110.
93 *Vsya Moskva. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga na 1905 god* (Moscow, 1905), section 'Ramki [Frames]'. Grab'ye, Datsiaro and Avantso were also leading antiquarians (Yakovlev, 1966, p. 175).
94 *Vsya Moskva* (1903), section 'Ramki'.
95 ORGTG, 54/532.
96 *Odet' kartinu* (2005), p. 33.

97 ORGTG, 17/1182, 1183.
98 Dal' (1878), p. 9; Stasov (1937), p. 135.
99 Obolensky (1902), p. vii.
100 Mudrogel' (1961), p. 150.
101 Repin (1986), p. 171.
102 Shcherbatov (2000), pp. 316–17.
103 Vrubel's special interest in ornament has been noted by a number of writers (Tarabukin, 1974, p. 48; Allyenov, 1978, pp. 191–209).
104 Vrubel (1976), p. 58.
105 'This is one of Vrubel's most magical works, and it was indeed the pearl of my collection,' Shcherbatov wrote of this painting in his memoirs. 'But I didn't like the frame. I didn't like its artistic idea, alongside the saturated beauties of the painting itself . . .': Shcherbatov (2000), p. 317.
106 Wagner (1978), pp. 164–95.
107 Nitsshe [Nietzsche] (1990), p. 153.
108 Quoted by Ritstsi (1993), p. 121.
109 Vyach. Ivanov devoted an article to the synthesis of the arts in painting (Ivanov, 1979, IV, pp. 147–70). For more detail on links between Symbolist painting and poetry, see Rusakova (1995).
110 In the notes to his rose poems Ivanov even gives the sources of the symbolism of the flower that appeared in Somov's richly ornamental frontispiece with interwoven roses.
111 Vyach. Ivanov (1974), II, p. 86.
112 Nesterov (1988), p. 184. We know about Nesterov's concern with the frames for his paintings from his letter of 24 April 1928 to Peter Neradovsky asking for the dimensions of the stretcher for *Taking the Magic Potion* (*Za privorotnym zel'yem*) when he was preparing to send the Russian Museum 'a narrow antique-style frame to replace the unsuccessful one of oak': ORGTG, 31/1056.
113 Nesterov (1988), p. 166.
114 Ibid., p. 167.
115 Nesterov's paintings were copied by local craftsmen and at times regarded as icons. Thus at the *Second All-Russian Exhibition of Local Art* (1913) a copy of the *Labours of St Sergius* triptych was shown as a hinged 'icon', with a carved frame made by craftsmen from the village of Kudrino in the province of Moscow: *Russkoye narodnoye iskusstvo na Vtoroy vserossiyskoy kustarnoy vystavke v Petrograde v 1913 godu* (Petrograd, 1914), pl. 120.
116 Bely (1994), p. 253.
117 Other artists with a similar approach to their frames include Gustave Moreau, Arnold Böcklin, Franz von Hofmann and Gustav Klimt (Roberts, 1985, pp. 155–72; Newbery, 2002, pp. 57–8, illus 23, 24; Mitchell and Roberts, 1996, p. 12).
118 Mendgen (1995), p. 29.
119 Repin (1986), pp. 405, 407.
120 Quoted by Mendgen (1995), p. 42.
121 Newbery (2002), p. 76.
122 Mendgen, ed. (1995), illus. 143–5.
123 Cahn (1995), p. 31; Waschek (1995), pp. 142–4. L. F. Zhegin, however, maintains that 'the connection between form and frame in Impressionist painting, while not being wholly absent, was nevertheless considerably weakened' (Zhegin, 1970, p. 69). In as far as the Impressionists stood for the 'unexpected' and 'directness of vision' in painting, their picture frames sometimes lost their 'window' function and found themselves in contradiction with the new style of painting.
124 A vast variety of photograph frames was represented at the exhibition *Life in Frames: The Art of the Photograph Frame at the Turn of the 19th/20th Centuries* held at the Historical Museum, Moscow, in 2002. It was interesting to note that in many frames the mytho-poetic world of *stil' modern* seemed almost intentionally to have been made to conflict with the 'mechanistic' medium of photography. All kinds of folktale figures and fantastic beasts and birds depicted on frames proclaimed their own active presence in contradistinction to the 'reality' that photography aimed to communicate, constantly demonstrating to the latter, as it were, a necessary relationship with the realm of fantasy and the unconscious. Here, in the present writer's view, lies the special significance of the history of the photograph frame in modern cultural anthropology.
125 Borisov-Muratov's exhibition is recalled by the artist Arkadiy Rylov (1954, p. 118).
126 Lapshin (2000), p. 83. The artists of the Knave of Diamonds group would often liken the exhibition hall to the theatre, with its scenic images: 'The whole image of the "painterly activity" of the square' created by Moscow artists at their exhibitions was

for them at the same time . . . an “image of Russia”’: Pospelov (1990), p. 24.
127 Gavryuseva (1987), pp. 229–36.
128 Shcherbatov (2000), pp. 162–3.
129 Loos (1998), p. 171. The earliest of Loos’s interiors without ornament is the Museum Café in Vienna (1899).
130 Sullivan (1988), p. 80.
131 Jacques Derrida discusses this topic in *La Vérité en peinture* (1978) (Derrida, 1987, pp. 57–9).
132 Gadamer (1991), p. 184.
133 Gleizes and Metzinger (1913), pp. 81–2.
134 Grishchenko (1915), p. 10.
135 Mendgen, ed. (1995), ill. 222.
136 Newbery (2002), p. 78.
137 Picasso, therefore, conceived his still-life *Pipe with Page of Manuscript* (1914) as a ‘picture within a picture’. He repeated the real period picture frame within the picture plane, thus pointing up the problem of the Renaissance frame-as-window (Mendgen, ed., 1995, illus. 221).
138 Zdanevich and Larionov (1999), p. 242.
139 Berdyayev (1918), p. 30.
140 Terekhina and Zimenkov, eds (1999), pp. 226–7.
141 Uspensky (1918), p. 9.
142 Ibid., p. 98.
143 Bobrinskaya (2002), p. 145.
144 Tarabukin (1923), p. 9.
145 Kandinsky, ‘Stupeni’ (2001), pp. 279–80.
146 In this connection Uspensky is emphatic: ‘Art is a powerful means of apprehending the realm of the numinous; profound mysteries, each more astonishing than the last, open up before the eyes of a person who holds this magical key in his hands’: Uspensky (1992), p. 159.
147 Kandinsky, ‘O dukhovnom v iskusstve’ (2001), p. 129.
148 On terms of friendship with Schoenberg, Kandinsky dedicated an article to him (see Kandinsky, ‘Kartiny Schonberga’, 2001, pp. 201–5).
149 Kandinsky, ‘O dukhovnom v iskusstve’ (2001), p. 129.
150 Kandinsky, ‘Stupeni’ (2001), p. 276.
151 ORGRM, 137/1186/2, reverse. This letter was written in response to Benua’s criticism of the Futurist exhibition *0.10* held in Petrograd in 1915. For Benua, *Black Square* evoked iconic associations, on which Malevich also commented (see Benua, 1916).
152 Grishchenko (1917), pp. 7, 37. It is to be noted that P. Florensky shared with the artists of the avant-garde the precept that ‘forms should be grasped in the light of *their own life*, take expression in terms of *themselves*, openly to the understanding, not in accordance with predetermined perspectives’ [author’s emphasis] (Florensky, 1990, p. 60). Florensky’s preparatory material for his book on iconostases contains excerpts from Grishchenko, in particular: ‘A painting has every right to address the viewer directly, in its own language, the riches of which are immeasurable.’ On the same page Florensky observes that it is possible to speak of ‘the language of the icon’ only in terms of the art of composition, of paint and use of materials: Florensky (1994), p. 210.
153 *Utro Rossii* (27 October 1911).
154 Grishchenko (1917), p. 26; see also pp. 17, 250, 259, 262.
155 Gray (1962), p. 97; Bowlt (1991); Tarasov (1992), pp. 49–53; Tarasov (1998); Tarasov (2002), pp. 45–7.
156 Quoted by Khardzhiyev (1976), p. 123.
157 Malevich (1922), p. 19.
158 Malevich, ‘Nashe vremya yavlyayetsya epokhoy analiza . . . ’, in id. (1998), II.
159 Terekhina and Zimenkov, eds (1999), pp. 323, 325.
160 Kruchonykh and Khlebnikov (1913).
161 Malevich, ‘Ot kubizma i futurisma k suprematizmu’, in Malevich (1995), I, p. 53.
162 Ibid.
163 Malevich (1920), pp. 1–3.
164 Malevich, ‘K novomu liku’, in Malevich (1995), I, p. 63.
165 Malevich, ‘O muzeye’, in ibid., p. 134.
166 Malevich, ‘Analiz novogo i izobrazitel’nogo iskusstva’, in id. (1998), II, p. 149.
167 Le Corbusier (2006), p. 403; Bataille (2006), p. 430.
168 Further on these processes, see Putnam (2001).
169 Present-day philosophy has thrown up the concept of the ‘installational frame’, that is, an installation as an artistic action, some kind of invisible copied structure picking up, in copying an object, initial meanings, as one scholar reflects: ‘And so, in order to seize the essence of the thing, the event or portion of space . . . the installation must be a frame: *showing external reality*, making spatial worlds visible from

the viewpoint of an absolutely impartial observer . . . or *taking a conceptual form*, embracing all types of installations of objects – and unquestionably a subjective form, the observer with all his baggage of partialities and contexts; *or it must take a visual form (or one that is in some way apprehensible by the senses)* that captures the spatial nature of the thing thanks to its transformation into a purely optically apprehensible object' [author's emphasis]: Podoroga (1999), p. 186. On exhibitions of present-day art, see further Miziano (2000), pp. 88–95.

170 Guggenheim (1897). On this book, see Penny (1998), p. 375.

171 Sokolov (1999), p. 167.

172 Vrangel' (1913), pp. 66, 76.

173 Newbery (2002), p. 5.

174 'Lely' and 'Canaletto' frames, notes Grimm, were so-called only because they were most frequently found with paintings by these artists (Grimm, 1981), p. 18.

175 Vrangel' (1913), p. 62.

176 Stolpyansky (1913), p. 35.

177 Gogol (1949), pp. 103–4.

178 Tarasov (2002), pp. 326–44.

179 Goodman (1968), p. 99.

180 Vzdornov (1986), p. 186.

181 *Gosudarstvennaya Tretyakovskaya galereya* (1995), p. 81.

182 Gombrich (1989), pp. 63–90; see also Eco (1990).

CONCLUSION

1 Khaydegger [Heidegger] (1993), p. 109.

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INDEX